A Way to Live

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A Way to Live

by Sugarmouse

Summary

Hannibal is in the market for a new slave. It's time for his next experiment.

Notes

Please heed the warnings and tags. This fic is dark and kinky. Hannibal and Will are pretty messed up in this universe, which is understandable considering who they are and the rules of this world.

I'm alive! I know, it's been far too long since I wrote anything. This fic has taken a really long time to finish but I'd like to thank everyone who encouraged me to keep going. It's been tough but it's here. The whole fic is finished and will be posted as my beta finishes with it. Enjoy!

A huge thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta and for all the encouragement!

- Translation into Русский available: A Way to Live (Жить) by moonhorizon

Prologue

Will turns his head to the side as the other man presses up against him, pushing him against the rough concrete wall. He closes his eyes and feels hands pushing roughly, fingers pressing and tugging at the edge of his loose shirt, pulling the hem up to scrape blunt nails against Will's sides. He listens to the heavy breathing and grunts, the hoarse voice near his ear.

"Your ass is gonna be sweet, you little bitch," he growls and pulls at the elasticated waistband of Will's pants. Will opens his eyes and looks up at the dark sky above, the stars bright out here so far from the city. The night air is chilly and quiet and stinking of the smells of the factory. The rest of the slaves sleep and the single guard only pays attention to the area outside the fence.

Hobbs' hands are rougher than Will's own. He's been working at the plant here for far longer than Will has. He's grown tough and strong, working the more physically demanding jobs along the line, hauling the animal carcasses and anything else heavy. The callouses on his fingertips are coarse against the soft flesh of Will's sides. Will does not take off his shirt, even when the sun gets hot this time of year and the other slaves working outdoors do what they can to cool off. His skin is still soft and pale enough, he's still one of the shorter, better looking slaves. He's still new enough and soft enough and weak enough that one of the others would want him. It was only a matter of time.

Hobbs turns him around to face the wall and Will does not resist. Hobbs pushes him against the concrete side of the building, harder, more insistent, and Will rests his cheek against the cool rough surface. On the other side of the wall, the other slaves sleep, all male and exhausted from their labours. The smell from the plant lingers in the air, the stench of blood and death and the rotting contents of the waste pit on the far side of the factory.

He can feel Hobbs against his back, breath hot and stinking and Will does not fight. He breathes deeply, calmly, thinks of Hobbs' leering stares. He remembers the comments and threats, every one sent his way since he arrived here with the last shipment of slaves. Will wriggles to the side and Hobbs growls at him.

"Hold still you little bitch," he snaps and presses at Will's hips with his own, pulling at Will's shirt and breathing against his neck. His hands bunch up the back of Will's shirt, pulling it tightly against Will's chest and he presses his weight against Will heavily.

"Get on your knees," Hobbs says, his voice a hiss in Will's ear. He releases Will and he turns, faces the larger slave. Will looks up at the face of this man, leering and predatory. Hobbs grins at him and his hand presses at Will's shoulder.

Will does not move, not until Hobbs pushes him down so hard his balance is almost entirely lost. His elbow scrapes against the concrete and he hisses when his knees hit the solid ground. Hobbs goes for his own pants, hurriedly slipping them lower on his hips and pulling his cock out. He leers at Will and Will looks up into his eyes. The position is familiar, *too*

familiar. Will has a brief flash of a futile promise made to himself not that long ago that he would never allow himself to be put on his knees again and yet here he is.

Hobbs grabs a handful of Will's hair, pulling his head forward. His cock slides against Will's cheek and Will turns his face as much as he can to escape the smell of the other man. "Come on you little bitch," hisses Hobbs. "Your kind like this."

His kind, as though he chose the path his life has taken any more than Hobbs has chosen his. Will is calm as he reaches into his boot. Hobbs is too focused on his erection and Will's mouth and what he plans to do to notice the movement. Will clutches the makeshift blade between his fingers and gets a tight grip.

Hobbs leers, smiling at him and then Will smiles back. Will tilts his head as far as the rough fingers in his hair will allow him to. Hobbs is too filled with lust to be confused by the smile.

The metal in Will's hand is warm now from being pressed against his flesh, hidden against his ankle. Hobbs is too focused on his desire, breathing heavily and thinking about what is going to happen next.

Will's movement is swift, his aim true. He does not hesitate, the stakes too high for him to do so. He swings his arm up and the blade sinks into Hobbs' side.

Hobbs does not yell immediately, the shock momentarily stealing his voice. He sucks in a breath and Will is free from his grip and pulling the knife out.

"You..." Hobbs screams, his fingers clutching at his side. He makes a gasping noise and Will stabs him again. The blade slides in and it's harder than Will thought it might be, just a little different to slicing the pigs on the factory line. The live squirming flesh offers more resistance than he would have guessed.

Hobbs coughs and it's wet and loud. Blood dribbles from his lips and he snarls at Will, teeth dark in this light and eyes feral. Will pulls the blade free and steps to the side as Hobbs reaches for him. Will stands out of his reach, poised with the blade held out but he does not need it again. Hobbs falls to his knees.

Will watches the blood pumping from between Hobb's fingers at his side, the red at the other hole in his chest drenching his shirt. Red but so dark in this light, difficult to tell its exact colour. Hobbs is wide eyed and shocked and *dying* and Will watches him *die*.

Will watches him fall and bleed out, breaths stopping quickly. The whole thing is over in seconds, the guard arriving after the life has left Hobbs' body. He shines his flashlight beam brightly in Will's face and Will drops the weapon, hands held up in surrender.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

A huge thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta and for all the encouragement!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The slave in the picture is scruffy, rough looking despite the freshly shorn hair in the photograph. It's the black eye and split lip, fresh in the picture but who knows how long ago it was actually taken. The face is not that of the slave one might expect someone like Doctor Hannibal Lecter to be interested in but then the same could be said of all of Hannibal's selections today. An outsider might not spot the pattern. They're not all house slaves or "personal" slaves. They're not all luxury products with high end prices. Their only common factor being something less obvious to anyone but Hannibal himself. He knows what he's looking for and every time he does this, he learns a little more about the type of slave that he wants.

The digital catalogue has hundreds of offerings, Hannibal has been perusing it all week as the urge to start again with a new slave has re-emerged. It's been a while but the gaps between each new slave grow shorter, with each getting closer to whatever it is he's searching for.

Hannibal flips back through the pictures of the bookmarked slaves. There are several of interest but each one he's requested a viewing of have been disappointing in some way or another. He knows he's looking for something specific, but it would be difficult to describe to anyone. He just knows, he'll know when he sees it. Perhaps he sees some of it in merely a photograph because he keeps flipping back to the image of this one. A face and shoulders against a white background, a fresh black eye and hair cut short against his scalp and some twinkle of defiance in those eyes.

The slave has a certain beauty, the structure of his face has a delicate aspect to it despite the coarseness of bruising and injury. Hannibal can tell he'll be attractive enough with a bit of care. He would have been breathtaking once, some of his first file entries list *personal use* after all. He's short enough and handsome and he'll no doubt be pretty with some thorough grooming and care. He could be the type of slave that someone like Hannibal would be expected to own, even if he's older than fashion dictates. It's no surprise what his uses have been in the past, what uses Hannibal might find in him again. It's not the specific purpose that Hannibal wants him for right now but it's happened before, with a number of the others. He wouldn't rule out the possibility if he feels that way when they're alone in his home and Hannibal *owns* him.

It is not the slave's face and body that interests Hannibal. There are prettier and newer slaves, the kind that come with very specialised training and skills, the kind that don't come with a

lengthy file and pre-scarred and bruised.

Hannibal pulls up the slave's file on the tablet computer once more, an action he's repeated more than he'd admit if asked. He scrolls through the history file, the parts standing out that piqued his interest when he first began this new search for this new candidate.

Personal use - other, personal use - other, domestic labour - injury (minor, non scarring), personal use - injury (minor, minor scarring), manual labour lot 44785 - other. Years of a slave's life boiled down to so few words, each entry a new owner and a reason to pass this slave along.

Other is a term that shows up in slave files frequently. The category for things that people don't like to talk about. It's how their slave reached puberty or grew too old to meet their tastes. It's how a slave got violent but not so violent that they'll not try to recoup what they paid for it. People don't like to talk about the types of incidents that happen, the type of incident that draws Hannibal to a slave.

Most might not care to go from such a brief summary into the detailed report but Hannibal did and does so now again. It's written in careful prose, using careful coded language to hide what might have actually happened. It was enough to cause Hannibal to bookmark the slave though, enough for him to take a second look at that picture and perhaps foolishly begin to hope that *this time* things will be perfect.He lingers at the last entry, reading over it once more. He has his suspicions, he knows they haven't outright said it in their words but the supposed *incident* with another slave, a slave's death...Hannibal licks his lips and hopes that this slave will be close enough, has possibly appreciated the death in the way that Hannibal hopes he has.

Hannibal closes the catalogue application and puts the tablet down. He looks around the room. The waiting area is cleanly furnished, plain cream leather couches and low tables with the kind of modern artworks on the wall that Hannibal does not care for. Beyond the facade of the reception and viewing rooms, Hannibal is in no doubt the conditions would be much more spartan. Places that deal in these kinds of volumes, who deal in numbers and profit couldn't be anything but.

Hannibal's attention goes to one of the plain white doors along the wall when it opens. The same man who lead him to this waiting room emerges, straightening the cuffs of his shirt and smiling at Hannibal.

"Doctor Lecter," he says in the overly friendly voice of a salesman. "The next slave you requested is ready for viewing."

The man steps aside and Hannibal enters the room. It's a small plain room that echoes the design of the previous waiting area down to the plain couch and low table. His attention is not on the decor though, instead he stares at the slave.

The slave stands in the open area of the floor, head down, feet apart. His pose is good, straight and neat and unmoving. Hannibal can see that he was a well trained personal slave once just from this perfect pose.

The salesman launches into his demonstration, putting his hand on the slave's shoulder and using his other hand to tilt his chin up. The slave keeps his eyes down and Hannibal studies his face thoughtfully. He tunes out the patter of the salesman. It is not *his* words that might convince Hannibal to make a purchase today.

"He's a little older than some of the others you've looked at but you can't tell with these looks," says the salesman, "that can be an advantage, he has the training and he knows his place." He takes his fingers from the slave's chin and the head slides down, eyes back to the floor. Hannibal narrows his eyes and steps forward.

Hannibal brings his own finger up to the slave's chin and tilts the face up again. There is no resistance, a mere touch and the slave reacts, lifting his face up for Hannibal's inspection. For all appearances he is the perfect slave, if not for the fading bruises.

The black eye is yellow and green, it will be completely gone very soon. The face is pretty enough, freshly washed and shaved. They'd want their merchandise to look it's best and they've done what they can considering the state the slave must have arrived in. Hannibal can definitely see potential here. With hair grown out and appropriate clothing this slave would be quite pretty, fitting enough for someone like Hannibal to take out in public.

"Obviously he was returned from the last lot he was placed with but I assure you, he's not a trouble maker," says the salesman and Hannibal narrows his eyes. He removes his finger and the slave's head tilts back down to the floor.

"I've read his file, I'm aware of his history," says Hannibal. The salesman smiles that wide fake smile of his and pats the slave on the shoulder.

"Oh he's harmless, I assure you, blown quite out of proportion. It was self defence after all."

"Is that so," says Hannibal quietly, watching the slave for any response to the words being spoken.

"Oh yes," says the salesman. "They deemed him too old for personal use so he was put into a lot of unskilled labourers. It wasn't a good fit and now he's back here and I spotted his potential, pulled him out for individual sale." He beams at Hannibal as though expecting praise. Hannibal does not supply it. The slave does not react to their words, Hannibal is not sure what to think of that.

"Perhaps you'd like to see the rest of him," offers the salesman. He must worry about his impending sale and he turns to the slave and snaps his fingers. "Strip," he barks. The slave pauses for just a moment, long enough to break the illusion of perfection. He unzips the jumpsuit and steps out of it, leaving it pooled on the floor.

He stands in the same position as before, wearing nothing but plain white cotton underwear. Hannibal takes in the slave's body at his own leisurely pace. His eyes slide across the shoulders, the fading bruises and faint scarring across the upper part of his chest. There are marks, but not many. His skin is relatively smooth and beautiful looking. He is not strongly muscled but he is lean, looking more as though he requires some decent food than anything else.

“Perhaps you’d like a moment alone Doctor Lecter,” says the salesman, stepping back away from them. “I’ll remind you that sampling is not permitted but I am quite happy to give you a private moment for a thorough inspection.” Hannibal does not speak, he does not wish to waste energy on the man. He takes the silent hint and leaves and Hannibal narrows his eyes at the slave.

As though sensing Hannibal’s eyes on him, the slave’s head slowly raises and he looks at Hannibal. His eyes are clear, bright and sharp and intelligent. Hannibal smiles.

Hannibal has been through this process before, has viewed many slaves. He’s purchased and used plenty, enough that he is rarely surprised. He licks his lips and the slave’s eyes bore into his own. It is bold, for a slave to maintain eye contact like this without an order. Perhaps this slave is not so well trained as they claim him to be.

“Do you have a name?” asks Hannibal. The slave swallows and his eyes slide to the floor.

“If you intend to buy me, you can call me whatever you wish…*sir*,” says the slave. His voice is soft and appeasing and the contrast in the words and their tone makes Hannibal laugh. It’s an instant decision, easily made. Hannibal has always preferred to make these choices based on instinct and this one seems particularly appropriate. The slave looks up, cocking his head a little with what appears to be curiosity. Hannibal purses his lips and then smiles. The slave looks away, breaking the eye contact but not the fleeting hint of connection that Hannibal feels.

“Yes, I believe I will be buying you,” says Hannibal. “And yes, I could call you whatever I desired to call you. But what I desire to call you is by your name.” The slave stares at him, his mouth slightly open in shock but he recovers quickly, returning his face to neutrality in the blink of an eye.

Outside, the salesman knocks on the door and slides it open, sticks his head through the gap, that pathetic smile plastered across his face. “Everything to your satisfaction?” he asks, his tone just a little too shrill. Hannibal nods at him, refusing to waste more words than necessary on the man and he returns his attention to the slave. The slave’s head ducks down towards the floor once more.

“I’ll be with you in just a moment,” says Hannibal, his eyes never leaving the slave. The salesman responds in that simpering tone of his and he shuts the door. “Your name,” says Hannibal. The slave’s head comes up again and he frowns at Hannibal.

“My real name?,” he asks softly, “or do you only want to know what they call me.”

Hannibal sighs and takes a step back from the slave. “I wish to know what you prefer to be called so that I may call you by it.” He watches a frown cross the slave’s face briefly.

“Am I permitted to speak sir?” asks the slave.

“Yes,” says Hannibal. He stands up straight and watches intently as the slave bites his lip.

“I am too old for personal use,” says the slave. He looks down at the floor. “They’re only selling me by myself because my last lot didn’t work out.” His voice goes quiet, barely audible but Hannibal still hears the words. “Why would you want me?”

In another, perhaps the quiet tone would stir pity. Hannibal does not answer and for a moment he’s torn between wanting this slave for his own and the disappointment of seeing yet another pathetic creature in front of him. In this moment the slave does not seem like he could ever become what Hannibal desires.

Hannibal must be silent for too long. The slave looks up at him, head tilted and questioning and there’s a flash of *something* there. Is it wishful thinking that he sees this as an act, that this slave is cunning enough to attempt a manipulation of this sort so early. Hannibal smiles and he answers the question in a way that is only possible with this new possibility in mind.

”You intrigue me.”

He watches the subtle, almost imperceptible, clench of muscle, tension building in the slave’s body.

”Tell me,” says Hannibal softly, taking a step even closer, crowding, intimidating. “Tell me about the slave you killed.

”It was self defence.” The words come out so quickly, sharply, said with the kind of tone that it’s usually beaten into a slave to avoid. It’s enough for Hannibal to *know* that this is the one. “He wasn’t my master,” says the slave. He looks down, tone and body soft, back to submission and that sudden anger and fire pressed down somewhere inside him.

The slave looks small, shoulders hunched and voice low. He seems so pathetic and weak and yet Hannibal knows there must be strength there, he’s seen it in his eyes. The slave may try to appear meek but it’s too late to convince Hannibal of that now.

There’s another knock at the door and the slave looks up briefly before ducking his head back to the floor again. It’s one act for Hannibal’s benefit and another for the salesman. Hannibal tilts his own head a little. “Your name,” he says and he sees the slave’s fists clench by his sides.

“It’s Will,” he says softly and Hannibal files it away and turns to look at the door and the salesman’s wide fake smile as he steps inside.

"He's nice to look at," says the salesman, walking towards them. Pressing for a sale and his commission and perhaps the added bonus of getting rid of a slave that wouldn’t normally be so quick to sell. “You took a good look yes? He’s in good condition for his age.” Especially one that is older than their usual private sale stock and with a longer history file too.

“I’ll take him,” says Hannibal. He is blunt if only to cut off more of the salesman’s irritating faked enthusiasm.

The salesman leads him back outside and to his office, leaving Will standing alone in the small room in his underwear. The paperwork is easy and quick, the price is reasonable. A

slave with a history of problems, a slave with *that* many owners is one that does not demand a high price. He's too old to be a pleasure slave, too marked up and as much as they've tried to word things to their advantage, his history indicates he may not be perfectly docile enough. Yet Will was clearly not bred to be a good labourer. The incident that resulted in the loss of another slave, one which most likely *had* been a good worker, would simply have been the last straw.

"Tell me," says Hannibal as he fills out the change of ownership forms. "The slave he killed at his last placement."

"Was a slaughterhouse," says the trader absentmindedly, no doubt too focused on his commission to care beyond getting a signature. "Verger meats bought him as part of a lot of 200 slaves."

"Yes," says Hannibal, annoyed. He's read the file, incidents condensed down into single sentences. "The slave that he killed...."

"Oh don't worry," says the trader. "He's not violent, not hard to handle. He's small and prettier than anything else you'd find working heavy labour like that, it was just a poor decision to put him in that lot. As far as I can tell it was just self defence. I don't think the slave he killed actually got through to using him, if you're worried about that."

Hannibal frowns, unwilling to probe further. Self defence, the same story as the slave himself tells. Despite the characterisation of the incident, perhaps the slave will still be amusing for a short time. He can always buy another, it's not as though he doesn't go through them fairly quickly as it is. What's another slave? He'll make a meal in the end in either case.

Hannibal fills out the cheque and hands it over and takes his receipt and a delivery slip and he ignores the salesman as he ignores him back, his interest in Hannibal's business lost already with the monetary exchange.

Chapter End Notes

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

I really appreciate the positive response to the beginning of this fic. It's great after such a long period of not posting fic.

As always, please heed the warnings, this fic is getting dark....

I'm looking at posting twice a week until my beta catches up and then post more frequently. This fic is over 70k but the chapters are significantly longer than I usually write so it shouldn't take too long to post!

A huge thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta and for all the encouragement!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal meticulously prepares his ingredients, prepping for a dinner to be cooked later in the day. He can see his dish coming together already, picturing how he'll present his culinary creation once it's finished. He smiles and lets the process take over, the feel of the fresh ingredients in his hands, the handle of his knife, the sound of each careful movement. It will all come together to create a perfect end for this particular pig.

They are late and Hannibal thinks of how desperately rude it is to keep a paying customer waiting. When they finally knock he does not rush to the door, instead slipping off his apron and folding it carefully first. He moves the items requiring chilling to the refrigerator. He's in no hurry for people who don't show him the correct respect. When he finally answers his door, the delivery man looks slightly taken aback at his appearance. He must have expected a home like this to have a slave to greet visitors.

Hannibal's attention is focused behind the man though. *Will*. He's still dressed in the plain white jumpsuit that most slave warehouses clothe their stock in. His hands are cuffed in front of him and his head is tilted down but his eyes are up, staring through his lashes, and Hannibal smiles at this subtle show of boldness.

Hannibal signs the delivery receipt and watches him uncuff his new slave. Hannibal dismisses the man with a wave of his hand. He has far more interesting things to do and he turns, stepping into his home. He smiles when he hears Will's footsteps follow, crossing the threshold into Hannibal's house. How docile and attentive is his new slave *really*? Hannibal closes the door and leads Will upstairs, not looking back. He hears the momentary hesitation on the bottom step but his new possession is brave; he follows, eventually, the simple and hideous plastic shoes squeaking slightly against wood.

Hannibal is enjoying the palpable tension far too much to turn and reassure his new slave. He does not intend to use him, this soon or at all, he has not yet decided. The increase in his breathing tells Hannibal everything as to what this slave *expects* and Hannibal has always enjoyed subverting expectations.

Hannibal passes the door to the master bedroom and enters a guest room, he crosses the wooden floor, hearing how the noise of each of Will's steps changes as he walks across the threshold, slowing down. Hannibal strides into the bathroom, shoes clicking on marble tile and he leans down, plugging the bath and setting the hot water to run. He turns now, stepping out into the bedroom to properly *look* at his slave for the first time since getting him home.

Will stands, head down, eyes down now. He trembles slightly, beautifully, and for a moment Hannibal thinks of moving his game up sooner and reaching the best part. He controls the urge though, as he controls all things. The finale will be all the sweeter if he holds off.

Will's breathing speeds as Hannibal steps close. He hears Will hold his breath and Hannibal draws in deeply through his nostrils. Any natural scent is overpowered by the smell of cheap soap and whatever lice deterrent Will has been doused in. Hannibal wrinkles his nose and reaches fingers up.

Will turns his head, trying to move away from fingers that he may have thought were reaching for his chin and Hannibal smiles at that. He ignores the poor form, too taken with each indication that Will is not so broken and well trained as he perhaps should be. He carefully takes the tab of the zipper between his fingertips, drawing it downward. He hears the faintest whimper in Will's throat and can't help but smile at the sound.

He finds Will physically attractive and while he hasn't done enough to demonstrate what other characteristics about him might draw Hannibal to be intimate with him, Hannibal smirks at the thought of taking Will simply because Will seems to *not* want it.

Hannibal moves slowly, not from fear of startling his new slave but to savour the pleasure that this slow reveal brings. Will is, as he remembers from hours ago, lean and compact. The bruises are ugly simply because Hannibal was not the one to put them there but they demonstrate the potential of what Will can be under Hannibal's hand. His skin contrasts marks in a way that will one day make a pretty display.

Hannibal slides his hand firmly across Will's shoulder, down his arm, squeezing. It's clinical, testing his purchase and checking for defects and yet it brings Hannibal a thrill. He enjoys the feeling of tense muscles under his fingertips, can feel the worry in Will's whole body. He runs a hand down Will's chest, around and across the repeating bumps of his ribcage. He smiles at the clench of muscles under his fingertips as he reaches the top of Will's underwear.

The desire to be the one to slide the plain cotton down, to see Will squirm under his hands as he strips him bare is strong. It is not strong enough to overpower his desire to see Will in submission, baring himself by his own hands. "Strip."

Will is a little slow to react, his head still down, gaze fixed on the floor. It's the kind of pause just on the cusp of necessitating punishment but then his hands raise to his hips, sliding the

last of his old life off his body. “Good boy,” says Hannibal and he smiles at the brief frown that wrinkles Will’s brow.

Hannibal turns, musing on how long it will take this one to settle in, to get complacent, to grow *bolder*. Longer than the last one perhaps? It’s hard to tell, he saw intelligence in those eyes, especially at the showroom. He walks to the bathroom, checking the bathtub and watching it fill. As the water swirls, Hannibal has a sudden moment of suspicion, the thought of Will perhaps attempting to manipulate a master away from using him as a master might. Does Will not want Hannibal to use him through fear? Does he genuinely feel terror at being used or does he hope to stir the non existent pity in Hannibal so that he will not use him, at least not tonight. For a brief moment Hannibal must suppress a laugh at how strange if it is a ploy that it has come so close to backfiring so dramatically.

Hannibal runs his fingers in the water, just breaking the surface. Either he gives Will too much credit or Will is just as interesting as he’d hoped.

Hannibal leans against the side of the tub, reaching to turn off the water and inhaling the steam from the bath. He takes a moment to pick and choose bath oils, scents that will please his nose when mixed with Will.

Hannibal looks over his shoulder, smiling when he sees Will standing in the bathroom doorway. Will is looking at him but he turns his face down when Hannibal looks. He doesn’t try to cover himself, just stands with his hands hanging by his sides. Perhaps not so shy after all, but not as good a manipulator as he’d need to be to fool Hannibal.

“Get in,” says Hannibal, stepping aside and wondering when he’ll get a glimpse of the Will from before he owned him, when Will is going to realise that his constructed behaviour is fruitless. Will steps past him, sliding one pale leg up and into the water. He lets out an involuntary hiss at the heat of the bath and Hannibal smiles. Will sinks into the water and sits in the tub, hunched over and knees drawn up. Hannibal pauses to roll up his sleeves then pats Will’s head. The short hair under his hand is a soft prickle.

Hannibal presses Will down, and he goes, head under the water. Hannibal holds him there, for a moment, not long enough but too long at the same time. It would be so easy to maintain this pressure, to hold Will under and feel him fight. Perhaps Will wouldn’t fight at all though, perhaps he would simply accept his fate and that would be no fun at all. He releases Will’s head and he comes up for air, wiping water from his eye sand looking up at Hannibal. Dripping wet and something about him so beautiful, he makes quite a sight.

Hannibal is methodical, calm, collected, as he picks up the shampoo and begins lathering what little there is of Will’s hair. It doesn’t take long, and Hannibal imagines how his slave will look with hair long enough to run fingers through, if he even lasts long enough to grow it. He doesn’t use them all, not like that and yet he already wonders how Will’s mouth will feel, how his body might taste. He doesn’t usually pick his slaves for their looks and yet it’s such happy serendipity that Will is both interesting on paper and in physical appearance.

Will doesn’t really look at him, just stares ahead and moves willingly as Hannibal washes him. It’s as though he’s bathing a doll, rather than a living thing and as much as Hannibal enjoys the feeling of nervous tension in the muscles beneath his fingers, he grows bored

quickly. Will didn't seem stupid, didn't seem boring. Perhaps his nerves are for what he imagines will come next, once he's clean. Why would a master clean his slave if not for his own use. Will seems to be trying to keep his nervousness hidden but his attempts to do so are so unsuccessful it's pointless for him to try at all. Will *can't* be stupid, Hannibal hopes it so much he must believe it. Will must know that Hannibal doesn't feel sorry for him, that he doesn't feel pity. There's no point in putting on any kind of act. Hannibal smiles when he catches sight of Will watching him from the corner of his eye. He might be trying to hide but he doesn't do a very good job of it.

Will is an inanimate object, a mannequin that allows Hannibal to move and manipulate its limbs with little feedback. He's still as Hannibal holds one wrist, washing his arm with long strokes of the sponge. Will is relatively clean but not clean enough. They've cleaned him off, removed any body hair he might have naturally and yet he's not bare enough. Hannibal wants Will stripped of *everything* from the warehouse, the scent that clings to his skin included.

Hannibal savours this chance to examine Will's body intimately. He mentally measures each dimension, the length of limbs and angles of joints. He briefly washes Will's genitals, feeling him freeze even more rigidly in the water as Hannibal drags the sponge down. Will's body stiffens slightly and relaxes almost imperceptibly as Hannibal continues to glide the sponge across his skin. Each tiny movement at least some measure of a reaction, even if it's more subtle than Hannibal might have liked. Will is very still as Hannibal runs the sponge down his back, sliding against the crack of his ass. His limbs soften again when Hannibal's hand moves on, clinical and efficient.

Will moves slowly but he cooperates as Hannibal ushers him from the bath and into a towel. He stands and doesn't resist as Hannibal towels his hair dry. He looks rather sweet, ruffled and slightly red in the face from the heat. Hannibal walks out into the bedroom, opening the wardrobe and removing a set of clothes. One pair of boxer briefs, one pair of socks, a plain cotton undershirt, a crisp white shirt, and grey trousers, laid out on the bed. Hannibal pauses, considering before taking a black leather belt from the wardrobe as well. Will is quite a bit smaller than the last one. He waits.

"Whose clothes are these?" asks Will and Hannibal looks at him critically. Has he entirely given up on his little coy act or has he forgotten himself?

"You will afford me the correct respect," says Hannibal, enough warning in his voice to carry his message. "They belonged to your predecessor." Will doesn't react to that, hiding whatever emotion that information might have instilled in him. It will take time but Hannibal knows he must maintain consistency. It is only when a slave thinks that things have become routine that Hannibal can begin the true game.

Will looks good, though not as good as he will look in properly tailored clothes. Hannibal walks to the bedside table and picks up the box, carefully placed there since before he went to the slave showroom. He opens it, removing the strip of leather and moving to stand close to Will.

Another slave might have stepped back, might have flinched, but not Will. He stands still and holds his head up high enough to look Hannibal in the eye. Hannibal smiles as he slides the leather collar around Will's neck and fastens it shut.

Will swallows and Hannibal finds the movement against the leather aesthetically pleasing. “There,” he says and pats Will’s shoulder. Will looks up at him and something passes across his face, curiosity perhaps. This is always one of Hannibal’s favourite moments with a slave. Stripped of the old and with Hannibal’s collar on them. Will is his belonging now.

“What happened to my predecessor?”

Hannibal smiles and brings his hand up to cup Will’s cheek. “I find you interesting, Will. If you continue to interest me, and you *behave*, then you won’t need to find out what happened to him.”

“I’m sorry, Master.” Hannibal smiles at the words and the tone of Will’s voice that tells him he’s not sorry at all. Hannibal turns, leaving the room, walking downstairs towards his kitchen. As he takes the stairs one by one he replays Will’s words in his mind. He’s always enjoyed the subjugation of lesser creatures but one that might be a bit of a challenge will be so much more *fun*.

Will’s sock covered feet are soundless against wood, so Hannibal turns at the bottom of the stairs, pausing. Will is following him, holding the bannister and watching Hannibal intently back. Hannibal smiles at him and Will frowns before carefully relaxing his face, as though the frown had not existed across his brow in the first place.

“Dead then?” asks Will. “Master,” he adds a moment later and the thoughts of his predecessor seem rather important to Will at the moment. Hannibal shakes his head but it’s not an indication of an answer, rather the lack of one being provided.

Hannibal has always enjoyed cooking for an audience and he smiles as he makes his way to the kitchen and begins to pick things up from where he left them. Will is quiet and attentive but he’s not really the perfect viewer, he’s much too quiet for that. Hannibal’s ego has always enjoyed the fawning compliments that some of his guests can’t help but lavish his cooking with.

He slides the meat from the pan onto the chopping board, leaving it to rest as he prepares his garnish. Will frowns and he bites his lip. “You don’t like steak?” asks Hannibal and Will shakes his head but Hannibal isn’t sure if that indicates a *no* or not.

“Two plates, Master?” asks Will.

“I like to have company for dinner.”

“I wonder, Master, are you trying to lull me into a false sense of security?” asks Will and Hannibal chuckles. He puts the finishing touches on the plates and smiles.

“Oh no, you should be wary. You’re still my slave, Will.” And despite the demure way Will looks away and turns his head down, Hannibal knows this one is going to be enough of a challenge to be diverting, for a while.

Chapter End Notes

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

> Things heating up a bit. This goes down/up hill, depending on your liking of smut, from the next chapter onwards ;) Thought I would post another chapter before heading off to RDC! Enjoy :)
>
> As always, thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal lies in his bed, alone and reflecting on his day, or at least one very specific element of it. He thinks of Will, locked into the bedroom down the hall. He doesn't think Will is desperate or foolish enough to do something stupid. He'd seemed rather calm during their dinner, if a little quieter than Hannibal prefers his dining partners.

Hannibal turns from his side to his back and sighs, stretching and finding a more comfortable position. He's not quite sure what he expected from Will. Every slave he has done this with has been so different and if Hannibal is truly honest with himself, he's not quite sure what he's looking for from them either. Perhaps it's just a temporary distraction or perhaps it's something much more than that. Either way, how can he know *what* Will truly is when he's just barely scratched the surface. It will be some time before the slave relaxes and lets his guard down. It always takes a while.

Hannibal rolls onto his back and closes his eyes, replaying his crystal clear memories of the evening of Will's little act. He knows Will is not the timid, well behaved slave he seems to want to pretend to be, Hannibal *hopes* he isn't. Will's not quite the curious creature either, the one that Hannibal has caught glimpses of from the corner of his eye, studying Hannibal intently when he thinks he is unobserved. There are a hundred little tells that Hannibal has learned to look for, signs that a slave is not as submissive as they should be, not as broken as they appear.

Will had even asked his own questions of Hannibal, voice soft and quiet, wondering how many slaves Hannibal owns. Will is calculating his odds, looking for survival. There's a little creature capable of viciousness hiding inside, Hannibal is sure of it, Hannibal *hopes*.

Hannibal settles to sleep, knowing that the morning brings interest and fun. Will trying to figure out what Hannibal wants and trying to become *that* instead. If only Will realises that even Hannibal isn't quite sure what he wants out of these encounters, if not another life to take at the end of things. The game then, is the journey itself, the distraction of something a little bit exotic and unusual.

Hannibal drifts off and dozes and sinks into deeper sleep but the noise of a voice startles him upwards and into shallower depths of unconsciousness. He's aware of the sound before he can register exactly what it is. He sits up and holds his breath a moment to *listen*. In the silence of the house, the sound of a cry interrupts the quiet of the night.

Is Will so sloppy in his attempts at manipulation to try such a gambit on his first night? Hannibal smiles and stretches. If he were to call Will on his bluff, he might realise that Hannibal is not all that he appears himself. No, better to play along, for now. Hannibal slips out of bed and walks down the hallway in barefooted silence.

Hannibal unlocks the door and steps inside, seeking out Will's shape on the bed. He's kicked the sheets down and he moves slightly with a moan. He's only wearing the boxer briefs from earlier and Hannibal realises that Will either didn't go looking for the sleepwear in the wardrobe or discarded it when he did find it. It seems calculated, just short of stripping completely in order to tempt him, or goad him.

Hannibal moves silently through the dark room, closer to the bed. He leans a little nearer still to observe Will's face. He sniffs and smells sweat over the scent of Will he's already beginning to identify easily. It's a good act, perhaps even an edge of reality for Will to have managed to work his body up to this state. Hannibal sits on the edge of the bed and places a hand on Will's shoulder. Will freezes instantly and Hannibal is impressed with his reaction speed though disappointed that Will should give away that he's not truly asleep so easily.

Will turns, searching for Hannibal in the darkness. "Master?" he whispers, sounding groggy and disorientated. His act might be lacking in certain details but he's *good*.

"You were having a bad dream?" asks Hannibal, intrigued and wondering what story Will is going to cook up for him. He's never been interested in any of the various different theories of dream interpretation but Will doesn't need to know that much. He strokes his arm down the bare shoulder so close by.

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you," says Will softly.

Hannibal frowns and clears his throat. He wants to play this carefully, to make Will believe he's buying this, that he's as stupid as his previous masters must have been to fall for this.

"Master," says Will, sounding so believably tired and resigned.

"You don't like calling me that," says Hannibal, trying to sound empathetic. He sits down on the bed, shifting to his side slightly as he looks down at his slave. "You're allowed to speak candidly with me Will."

"Not too candidly....Master."

Hannibal chuckles and plucks at the crumpled sheets. He pauses, running fingers along the fabric and he looks at Will's face. Will trying to figure him out and Hannibal almost feels sorry for him, knowing that he won't succeed. Hannibal stands, deciding that if Will is going to play and take this risk that he might as well surprise him a little. He lifts the edge of the covers up, pulling the sheet up over Will before lifting the corner and slipping underneath

himself. Will turns over to face him, sliding away from him just a bit as he does so. From what Hannibal can make out in the darkness, he looks wary, suspicious, or perhaps he's just pretending to be so.

"I'm still your master, I just find you interesting and want to learn more about you. Why don't we start with your aversion to the word master?"

"An emotional response, I'll control it better, Master."

"I wish to know, Will." Hannibal sighs and curls a little under the covers, feeling the warmth of the mattress where Will's body has lain on the bed. "I'll make you a deal, if you are honest with me, I will not enforce your use of proper address."

"I'm tired, Master," says Will, sounding sullen and perhaps he's already tired of keeping up his act? He won't last long if that's the case. Hannibal tries to make out his face in the darkness. He thinks Will's eyes might be closed now. "Did you wish to use me, Master?"

Hannibal thinks that Will's question is designed to throw him off, to confuse him and make him feel guilty so that he *won't* use him. Perhaps if Hannibal felt the way other humans felt, he might have some emotional response to those words. While the idea of enjoying Will's body has been on his mind since he saw him, it is not Hannibal's primary concern at this moment.

"What did you dream about Will?"

Will sighs and turns onto his back, staring at the ceiling in the darkness. Hannibal resists the sudden urge to reach across the empty space between them to feel the warmth of Will's body first hand.

"I don't remember, Master."

Hannibal smiles. His evasive little Will, it's going to take longer than that to build something between them. It's not what Hannibal would call trust, no slave could ever *really* trust their owner but they all let down their walls eventually. Will can come to respect him in time, come to know him, come to have a certain set of expectations of his master, grow complacent enough that Hannibal can slip inside. "If you tell me, you don't have to call me master," says Hannibal softly.

"If you're not going to use me, may I please sleep, *Master?*"

Hannibal smiles and knows that Will is more aware than he might seem. Will must know that his survival rests on keeping Hannibal's interest. Even if this game ends, perhaps it will last just a bit longer than previous iterations.

Hannibal slides across the gap between them. Will is lying on his back and Hannibal moves his hand into the space between the sheet and Will's bare chest. Will's skin is hot and clammy but Hannibal doesn't mind. Will's sweat makes his scent strong, making the whole bed smell of him. Hannibal pulls Will towards him and Will comes easily. He doesn't resist as Hannibal positions his body, carefully turning him and moving behind him, spooning him in an

intimate embrace. Hannibal moves his nose to the back of Will's neck, bumping against the leather collar and inhaling Will's scent here. He runs his hand across the clenching muscles of Will's belly, first a light scratch of nails and then a tender stroke of fingertips across the same place. Will is not the only one who seeks to throw the other off balance through his actions. Will just doesn't know who he's up against. Not yet.

"Goodnight, Will," Hannibal whispers into his hair and Will doesn't respond. Hannibal ignores this small rude act. He settles to sleep and begins to drift easily. He will sleep well, here in this room but he knows that Will won't, not tonight. The thought brings a half smile to Hannibal's lips as he falls under.

Chapter End Notes

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

> Behold the Red Dragon 2 was so incredible and being around other fannibals has reinvigorated my muse! So I'm posting another chapter of this (it's already complete, my beta is working on the whole thing). I'm so excited to write something new!
>
> A huge thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta and for all the encouragement!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal's internal clock is impeccable. He does not drift awake, his mind going from unconsciousness to alert in moments. He lies still, eyes closed and uses his other sense to observe the room. He can feel the warmth of Will's skin under his arm. They're spooned together still and Will's body feels deliciously hot against Hannibal's. He's always enjoyed a warm body next to him.

Will shifts slightly and Hannibal makes sure he keeps his face neutral in feigned sleep now that Will is awake. Will's breathing is slightly elevated and Hannibal feels Will wiggle against him, pressing his ass into Hannibal's morning wood. What on earth is his little Will up to?

Hannibal keeps his breathing even, calm and unmoving as Will shifts again. Perhaps Will is testing him before he tries to escape the arm that Hannibal has thrown across his body. Perhaps Will is trying to call Hannibal's bluff and make him take him here and now.

Hannibal breathes evenly, feels how Will goes still against him for a moment before grinding back against him once more. His movements are definitely intentional and Hannibal wonders if, once Will is sure Hannibal is asleep, he'll get up to explore.

Will lifts Hannibal's arm, holding onto the wrist and Hannibal carefully focuses on letting his muscles feel slack. Will wiggles away from Hannibal and he repositions himself on the bed, sitting up. Hannibal can feel him move, feel the sheets slip down his own body as Will sits upright.

Hannibal can feel Will's breath against his face and Will must be leaning over him, studying him perhaps. If he did not possess the self control he does, holding the smile from his face would prove very difficult.

Will's breath sounds a little faster now as he moves, sliding the covers down Hannibal's chest and now Hannibal must expend some effort in keeping his face slack in "sleep". Will's fingers slide along his stomach and Hannibal becomes so very aware of his morning erection, half hard. Will presses Hannibal's hip, holding his breath and Hannibal doesn't fight as Will

rolls him onto his back.He lets out a sigh and Will is so still and silent, waiting. Hannibal keeps his eyes closed, as though slumbering on.

Will moves eventually, sliding the fabric of Hannibal's pajama bottoms down. Hannibal's lips feel dry now, but he resists licking them. He lies perfectly still, keeping his breathing deep and even. This is not what he expected of Will and he thinks of what exactly he might be up to.

The thrill of not knowing, of being unable to completely tell what another is thinking is thrilling. It's been far too long since Hannibal has had a slave with such an opaque mind. He can't wait to find out more.

How can Will know that he's outmatched, that ultimately he cannot fool Hannibal, cannot make him think that he's some sweet submissive little thing. Hannibal might not be sure of Will's intention with his acting but he knows that in the end, he always wins. Perhaps Will is trying to throw Hannibal off completely, or perhaps he's trying to show that he's eager to please, the perfect little bed warmer.

Will does not build up to the event, does not tease and work to arouse Hannibal. If he truly believes Hannibal to be asleep, it makes sense and Hannibal stays still, maintaining the illusion.

Will's mouth is hot and clearly well practiced. He slides Hannibal deep without any noticeable effort. He does not even make a sound as he takes Hannibal further against the back of his throat. Hannibal lets out a soft groan but this time Will does not freeze in place, doesn't pause. If anything, his movements become bolder, stronger, more enthusiastic.

As much as Hannibal enjoys the sensation of Will's mouth, as much as he enjoys the thought of Will doing this for him of his own initiative, Hannibal grows bored of lying still. He opens his eyes and looks down his body.

Will doesn't look up, his attention focused on the cock in front of him. He doesn't use his hands to stroke, rather to prop his own weight over his master's legs while he fellates him. Hannibal lifts his hand and runs it across the top of Will's head, feeling how soft his short hair is. The sudden touch makes Will jerk and he looks up at Hannibal.

He doesn't let Hannibal's cock slide from his lips, he keeps it in his mouth, rubbing his tongue along the underside as he looks up at Hannibal with big eyes. He looks so perfect like this, lips stretched around Hannibal's cock.

Hannibal presses down on Will's head and lifts his hips upward, forcing Will down onto him, forcing his cock deeper into Will's throat. Will does not struggle, does not try to escape. It's almost disappointing how he just accepts the movement.

Will is red in the face, eyes starting to close. Hannibal feels his throat convulse around his dick and it feels almost as good as watching the way Will's eyes go out of focus. Hannibal lets him go. Will rocks back, onto his side, gasping for breath. He doesn't speak, can't or won't, it doesn't matter. Hannibal watches him, sees the line of saliva run down from the corner of his mouth, lips red.

Hannibal smiles and stretches, leaning back against his pillow and looking up at the ceiling. He relaxes and waits. It is not long before Will is back attending to his erection. Will works him quickly, expertly and Hannibal allows his mind to drift in an effort to not come *too* quickly. He'd rather Will have to work for it a little longer.

Hannibal thinks of the appointments he has to keep tomorrow, of the set of kidneys in the fridge that he should prepare today, of how good Will is with his mouth. He can't keep his mind off the sensation that much, it's too good, too intense and Hannibal has always enjoyed such *intense* experiences.

Will is good, he doesn't startle when Hannibal comes. He cups Hannibal's balls in one hand, sucking on his dick and swallowing hard around Hannibal's orgasm. Hannibal is silent, luxuriating in the afterglow. He smiles and ignores Will for a moment, focusing inward on the sense of calm that always accompanies a release.

Will moves around, kneeling and resting his hands on his knees. He holds a submissive pose, head down and shoulders slightly hunched. He does not wipe the wetness from around his mouth, does not try to hide the obvious signs of what has just taken place.

"Good boy," says Hannibal and he really shouldn't have. Will has taken the kind of initiative that Hannibal doesn't encourage in his slaves this early on but it's the kind of thing he *wants* in his slaves. He moves to sit up, observing how Will watches him from under his eyelashes.

"Thank you, master." The words are barely above a whisper and even then Will's voice sounds rough, throat abused. Hannibal knows this was not the act of a meek slave trying to win approval with his new master. Hannibal *knows* that it was calculated, each little quirk of Will's behaviour giving him away. He is so very fascinating.

Hannibal slips out of the bed, pulling his pajama pants up and stretching to greet the morning. "You will shower, dress from the clothes in the wardrobe, then come downstairs." He leaves the room before Will can respond.

Hannibal's morning routine is accompanied by a sense of satisfaction that can't solely be attributed to Will's method of waking him. He showers briskly by himself and imagines having Will wash his back...in the future perhaps. Hannibal carefully picks out the perfect outfit; casual, for him. By the time he comes downstairs, Will must have been sitting at the kitchen counter for some time. He stands when Hannibal enters the room, bowing his head. Hannibal smiles.

"You may sit on the chairs, Will."

"Yes, master, thank you."

Hannibal ignores him and goes to the fridge, removing the ingredients for breakfast. He prepares his mise en place, enjoying the selection of colour as he chooses fresh peppers to include in his omelette. "I will forgive your choice to wake me up in that way without my express permission," he says as he selects a knife. "On one condition." Will looks at him, frowning. Perhaps he doesn't realise that his expression is plain across his face, or perhaps he does not care that Hannibal *knows* that everything is an act.

“And what would that be?” asks Will coldly. Hannibal shakes his head smiling.

“Answer my questions honestly, and I will not punish you for forgetting your place here.” Will looks down at the floor and Hannibal cracks the eggs into a bowl, watches for the pan to heat. “It’s very simple Will, and not much to ask.”

“I have nothing to hide, master,” says Will, his voice sounding stilted, unsure. Hannibal studies him carefully, noting the hard lines of tense muscles in his shoulders.

“Never mind, Will, just sit and we shall enjoy a breakfast together.” Hannibal is patient, he can wait for Will to come around. They all do, eventually.

Chapter End Notes

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

> Just a short one but interesting things are imminent! My beta has been making some amazing progress with beta-ing so hoping to get the rest of the chapters posted shortly!
>
> Beta by endellionaeternus / Endellion!

Will is very quiet all morning. He does not speak much, even when prompted. He delivers the bare minimum of words and even then they're not the truth of things, not the things Hannibal hopes to hear. Hannibal is patient though, he can wait for Will to grow bored or complacent, whichever is the necessary state for Will to play into Hannibal's hands.

Will's reticence is dull, the precursor to something far more interesting. Hannibal instructs Will to clean the kitchen and downstairs toilet and goes to play his harpsichord. It's easier this way, to leave Will to *think*. He'll come around all by himself.

The music comes easily to Hannibal, beautiful melodies that he hadn't previously considered. In the quiet moments as he writes them down, he listens for the distant sounds of Will, pottering around in the kitchen. He smiles and replays the section he's attempting to perfect.

Hannibal loses himself to time and distraction, noticing the approach of lunch by the feeling of his empty stomach more than anything else. He gets up and stalks silently through the house, seeking Will.

Hannibal watches from the doorway when he reaches the downstairs toilet. It's unusual for someone of his stature and for someone with a house of this size not to keep a slave or two for cleaning and maintenance. Hannibal enjoys his privacy far too much for that. Still, it's nice to have someone to do this menial work for him.

The sight of Will on his knees, sleeves rolled up and brush in hand as he cleans the floor is quite a sight. Hannibal notes that he really must get Will some appropriate clothes for doing chores around the house. He does not want to consider the wear that the motion has put on the fine pants he's wearing. The clothes are not Will's though, they belonged to another and they outlasted their owner. Hannibal will buy new clothes, better ones that fit Will perfectly. But what is to become of Will's new clothing when he's gone too?

Hannibal stands watching and waiting for Will to notice him. Perhaps he does and pretends not to or perhaps he is so absorbed in his task. It is several minutes before he turns, looking up at Hannibal. He bows his head. "Master," he says softly and Hannibal admires how well it suits him to be on his knees when he says it.

“I thought you might join me for lunch,” says Hannibal. “I would like the company.”

Will stands, head down. “As you wish master,” he says softly and Hannibal has to wonder how long this is going to last. Will can’t believe that Hannibal has bought this act, or maybe he hopes he can wait Hannibal out. He might underestimate his new owner’s patience. Maybe he even thinks that Hannibal would be fine with *this* as the status quo.

Hannibal has Will sit on the stool, facing him as he begins throwing together ingredients for lunch. Will is silent, eyes watching intently despite his tilted down head and timid demeanor.

“How long do you intend on keeping up this act?” asks Hannibal as he chops herbs. Will doesn’t answer but Hannibal doesn’t really care. “I do hope you’ll feel comfortable and settle in here Will, I’d like to be able to trust you when I go to work.” Will looks up at that, staring at Hannibal with wide eyes. Hannibal pauses in his food preparation to smile at him.

“You work? ...Master.” Will adds the word after a slight hesitation. Hannibal smiles.

“Your last private master didn’t I take it? Unlike some, I prefer to engage my mind and stay active. I think I would get rather bored cooped up inside all the time.” Will clenches his jaw at that and Hannibal has to wonder just how much freedom Will’s previous living situations had afforded him.

“When I go to work, I would prefer to let you have free run of the house, but that is something that you will *earn* in time.” Hannibal admires his homemade sausages as he separates the links. “For now you will be confined to your room when I am away.”

Will doesn’t respond, the good little slave not questioning his owner’s wishes. He sits motionless on the stool, watching Hannibal’s hands and how strange it must be for him to keep up this little act while his master prepares food to serve him.

Will is silent as Hannibal crisps the sausages in the pan. Preparing them brings back the enjoyment that Hannibal had taken in *every* step of making them. He is a bit showier than usual in his movements around the stove, enjoying the audience, even if it is not a vocal one.

”Hannibal has never had much of an issue getting slaves to become attached. It’s just the first step in the game. The ones with past abuse always take a little longer to come around but Hannibal can manage it. He spoons fat over the sausages and glances up at Will.

Will sits, slightly hunched, eyes on the pan and Hannibal’s hands. Hannibal smiles and puts the pan down, focusing on plating his choice of salad and garnish.

”Tell me Will, were you born into slavery or something else?” asks Hannibal and, to his surprise, Will answers.

”Traded, when I was a kid,” says Will, his voice sounding a little distant. He shakes his head, seemingly aware that he’s spoken and he sits up straight. “Master.” He adds the last word and Hannibal looks at his sullen face and smiles.

”I’d like to know the circumstances.”

Hannibal notes how the muscle in Will's jaw clenches momentarily. "You've read my files, master." Will says the words sweetly with a look of forced innocence on his face. Hannibal nods.

"Yes, I suppose I have," he returns his focus to the food, leaving Will to stew for a bit.

The preparation of the food complete, Hannibal carries the plates to the dining room and tuts at Will's attempt at laying the table. It's not to Hannibal's standards, but he will learn.

Hannibal sits and he watches as Will moves around the table, heading the the opposite chair. "I didn't say you could sit," says Hannibal and he enjoys the brief look of panic on Will's face. "You will kneel, here." Hannibal gestures to the floor next to his seat. Will pauses, a fraction too long but he moves, sliding to his knees next to Hannibal's chair. It's a bit old fashioned, to have a slave kneel next to their master like this but Hannibal has always enjoyed the classics.

Hannibal slices a small piece of sausage and slides it onto his fork. He raises it to his mouth, enjoying how it looks and smells before placing it on his tongue. Exquisite.

Hannibal glances down at the top of Will's head.

"Tell me Will, do you behave this way because you believe that it is what I want?" Will hunches further, retreats in more and Hannibal slices another small piece of sausage.

Hannibal plucks the piece of meat from his fork and holds it between thumb and forefinger. He lowers his hand, watching Will intently.

Will does not realise the hand is so close, so when he sees it, he startles. Will raises his hand to take it. "No." Hannibal does not need to give further instruction than that and Will looks up at him, eyes wary as he leans forward. His lips are soft and he closes them over the sausage, over Hannibal's fingers and *licks*.

Hannibal smiles at Will's attempt to control this situation, to play into the role that he might think that Hannibal wants. His lips and tongue are sinful and conjure the memory of how they felt wrapped around his cock but Hannibal does not need that distraction right now, not with such fine sausage and such a pretty plaything.

Hannibal pulls his fingers out of Will's mouth and watches him chew and swallow. "How do you like it?" Will looks up at him and licks his lips.

"It's good Master." Will says the words with a breathy inflection and for a moment Hannibal is angry that he persists in his little act. He calms as he reminds himself that the real Will is going to be all the sweeter when he's revealed.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

A slightly longer chapter for you....

As always thanks to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will seems to be managing an impressive feat of self control. He has played his part through everything Hannibal has thrown at him so far. Hannibal finds it all disgustingly disappointing.

Will played the pretty pleasure slave at lunch and even though Hannibal allows him to sit at his own place setting for dinner, he sits primly and slices into Hannibal's carefully prepared dish of kidneys and flutters his eyelashes. When he slides the food into his mouth, he manages to make it appear almost pornographic. It all makes Hannibal feel so frustrated and unable to fully enjoy the meal he's spent so much time and energy to prepare. He doesn't appreciate Will's attempts at throwing him off balance, of making him *feel* off balance. Hannibal doesn't lose his cool, not when he doesn't already *want* to.

Will *wants* him to lose it, or perhaps he wants to give Hannibal what he *thinks* his new master wants. Hannibal can't quite tell if Will is playing some game or if he's giving his new slave too much credit.

"I will use you tonight," says Hannibal suddenly. He sounds so certain, even to his own ears. He hadn't planned on it, although he's thought of it, before now. He can't help but think of it when Will acts this way. The decision made, he tells himself it's purely a move to throw Will off base; to confuse him and make him regret this act. And yet, it's strange for Hannibal to feel a little piece of himself hope that Will is warming to him.

At Hannibal's words, there's a flash of something in Will's eyes but it's not fear. It's hidden again as quickly as it appeared. Hannibal smiles and nods; the decision is now made, each moment solidifying it a little more. "I will have you tonight, rather than wait as I had planned. I must say Will, your good behaviour has shown me that you don't need any more time to settle in."

Will smiles but it doesn't reach his eyes and he nods, putting down his knife and fork. He puts his hands in his lap, head tilted slightly down. "Yes, master." His voice is soft and measured and Hannibal can't read into his tone as much as he'd like.

"Tell me Will, are you getting bored yet?" Hannibal takes a bite of food, chewing slowly and letting the flavour spread across his tongue as he watches Will's impassive face. For a brief

second Hannibal wonders if he has miscalculated and the thought alone sends a thrill through him. If Will fails all else, at least he will prove more exciting than his predecessors.

”Bored, master?” Will does not raise his eyes from the table and Hannibal wonders how he would look with a second, fresher, black eye. There’s no sense in destroying something so nice to look at, not yet, not so quickly and thoughtlessly. Hannibal can wait for his satisfaction.

”Pretending, *acting*. It’s how you’ve survived up until now?” Hannibal raises his voice in a question but he doesn’t expect Will to answer. Hannibal cuts another piece and chews slowly, brief memories of this particular pig crossing his mind. He swallows and allows the smile to spread across his lips. “It’s a nice little show but I can see the edges.”

Hannibal lingers over his food, in no rush to finish and enjoying both the meal itself and watching Will far too much to hurry. He tries to read him, and for each moment he thinks he’s spotted a clue in one direction, there’s something to counterbalance in another. It’s a new feeling, since Hannibal has started these games with slaves.

Will eats, or at least makes enough of a show of what he is putting in his mouth that it might not be immediately obvious that he hasn’t really eaten all that much. It’s a shame to waste the meal but Hannibal savours Will’s discomfort and thinks about how far he’ll need to push to get a satisfying reaction.

Hannibal tells Will to clear the table and follows him to the kitchen, watching him carefully rinse the remains of that rather rude gardener’s liver down the garbage disposal. Will is methodical, just slow enough that it’s clear he’s stalling. Hannibal doesn’t tell him to hurry up, he prefers to build the suspense.

There are of course ways to break a slave. Hannibal knows about it from trial and error in his younger days, from the mistakes he sees fools making even now. He does not want to break Will, that would be too boring. He wants that fire, he wants to see Will’s secrets, open him up before he grows bored and opens him up in a literal sense and with far more finality.

”You will go upstairs and wait in my bedroom,” says Hannibal and Will lifts his chin to look up at him, looking him in the eye. He does not hold Hannibal’s gaze for long but in that moment, Hannibal knows he’s trying to gauge him, trying to understand or see something that Hannibal isn’t going to let show. Finally, he turns, walking slowly away, quietly out into the hall and up the stairs.

Hannibal lingers in the kitchen, listening to Will move until he’s out of earshot and pouring another glass of wine. He spends more time savouring the scent than drinking it and thinking about how long it’s been since he had such excitement from a slave. He waits even though he doesn’t particularly feel like waiting.

He finishes the glass and turns off lights as he makes his way down the hallway and takes the stairs slowly, as silently as possible. He listens intently but the house is quiet and still and he smiles when he sees his bedroom door ajar.

It's dark and Will squints, startled, as Hannibal turns the light on. His clothes are folded neatly on the chair by the window and Will sits, reclined slightly, on Hannibal's bed. He is beautiful in a rough and unfinished kind of way. He's not as polished in his grooming and posing as Hannibal would usually expect but he is all the more exquisite for it. He tilts his head and blinks, looks up at Hannibal.

Hannibal moves closer to the bed and Will sits up straight, hands resting on the bed beside his hips and making no effort to hide his nude body. Hannibal runs his eyes over his slave. "Turn over, I want you on all fours in the centre of the bed. Face the wall." Will obeys.

It's almost too easy and while Hannibal still wants Will's body, his easy acceptance, his easy submission, begins to lower his appeal. Hannibal wants to see the edges again, wants to see the cracks and inclusions in his act. He *knows* that what's being presented to him is not real, not the Will that's still hiding, just out of sight.

There are many ways Hannibal intends to take Will but tonight he wants to pick Will apart just a little bit. Perhaps he can break through this odd wall, find the fragility that's lurking so tantalisingly close. He wonders what it might take to help tip Will over the edge, make him stop pretending and show Hannibal his true face.

Hannibal removes his tie and begins unbuttoning his shirt, in no particular hurry as he watches Will move into position. Hannibal isn't sure if he expected Will to suddenly change his mind about playing along. As though Will would suddenly start to argue, to plead or to attempt to manipulate. But Hannibal is sure that he already is attempting a manipulation of a fashion. For what end Hannibal can't quite tell but there's something going on. Not knowing exactly what is exhilarating in a way Hannibal can't quite remember feeling, at least not with his previous slaves and not so soon.

There's no telltale quiver, no delicious shiver to build the anticipation. Will doesn't cast a seductive look his way, doesn't sigh. There's not even a look of fear to stir *something* inside of Hannibal. It is a disappointment and a challenge all in one. This is not seduction. It's a different test and yet this particular battle is nothing but a step towards winning the bigger contest.

Hannibal does not smile, does not quite know how he feels. He allows himself to be driven by instinct, by the sight of the naked body in front of him. He moves out of Will's line of vision and watches him, waiting for him to turn and look over his shoulder, to see where his master is. He doesn't.

Hannibal removes his shirt and moves into his walk-in closet, removing and hanging each item of clothing one by one. He moves slowly, all the better to tease and really, he can't find a desire to hurry when Will is acting so stoic. He tries to remind himself not to think, to fall back on the instinct that drove him so powerfully moments ago. He finds himself caught up in his thoughts, and he lingers so long there's a moment of almost surprise at the body on his bed when he emerges.

Will's outward appearance is calm, accepting. Even when Hannibal moves and the sound of him opening the chest at the foot of his bed in which a normal person might keep a blanket. He runs his fingers along the implements inside, bypassing some and lingering on others.

Will doesn't look up, he stares straight ahead as Hannibal moves to sit next to him on the bed, closing a leather cuff around each of his wrists and ankles. They are not too tight and they're soft inside and Hannibal hopes Will can see the mercy in this small measure. He had others to choose from.

Hannibal runs his hands down each limb as he goes, a mix of personal indulgence and the desire to use every little touch to put Will on edge. Will does not react or flinch and he keeps his position beautifully. The thought of how much it might take to break this one's spirit thrills him.

It's not malice that makes Hannibal roughly grip Will's final wrist, pull it out from under him to attach the chain to the bed post. It's not a desire to hurt him so much as provoke, to draw *some* spark free. Will falls forward with a quiet grunt, his other arm folding under his chest at the unexpected weight. Hannibal tuts softly and tilts his head to look down the twisted awkward form that Will's back now takes. The view is beautiful, of barely visible bruises and the faintest of scars and of skin taut over bone and flesh. The canvas is mostly blank and ready for the creation of something breathtaking.

Will does not right himself immediately, holding still until Hannibal releases his wrist. He wiggles upright, ass sticking up into the air as he finds his balance on one arm and he does not look to the side, his gaze remaining fixed to the head of the bed. Hannibal frowns, so brief an expression that even if Will had been looking, he may never have seen it cross his face.

Hannibal moves around the bed, looking at Will and thinking about what changes to make, what will look best and considering that there's a little too much hair on his body for Hannibal's tastes. Hannibal grips Will's other wrist as he reaches the left side of the bed and he smiles when he sees the telltale shifting of Will's shoulder as he adjusts his weight. It does him no good though and Hannibal pulls the chain tight, forcing Will to fall fall, his chest flat against the bed and his arms wide. With his knees still gathered up on him, the sight of Will makes quite the visual treat.

"Now stay," whispers Hannibal and he runs his fingers through what there is of Will's hair and smiles as Will goes slack, relaxing his upper body against the bed and turning his face away from Hannibal. Perhaps he can relax and in that reveal himself. But then would Hannibal find this as much fun? How boring would that be?

There are so many places to start and yet Hannibal does not feel the pull of any of them. This is not about his physical pleasure, though perhaps it should be. This is about something longer term than that and he knows that ultimately it will be far more enjoyable if he can resist. He doesn't want to though, there is a reason he's found himself with Will laid out like this so quickly.

Will's slackened back and spread knees are appealing. How resigned he looks, how willing to give in and yet Hannibal knows if he speaks to him, he will not be so willing to give in to his master's desires. Hannibal sits on the edge of the bed and reaches out his hand, tracing along Will's back, fingers finding the roughened line of a scar and tracing along it, softly enough to cause a twitch in Will's muscles as his fingertip follows along the side of his ribcage. He runs his hand along the centre of Will's back, tracing his spine down to his buttocks before

slapping one quickly, hard and fast and unexpected enough that Will is unable to tense muscles in time. Will is not so controlled as to avoid letting out a gasp and Hannibal smirks at the sound. He slaps Will's ass again but it's less enjoyable now that Will holds himself steady and takes it. Hannibal smacks him again and again, moving himself to a more comfortable position to continue. He slaps hard enough that his own hand starts to sting and Will's skin flushes deeper and darker but he holds still and he doesn't cry out. Hannibal is patient though, he is far more patient than Will might realise and he continues to rain slaps down, spanking Will's ass harder than he ever would if this was for some sexual gratification. This is not about sex, not for Hannibal. Will is attractive and his position on the bed surely conjures up visions of all sorts of delicious carnal treats and yet Hannibal's desire right now is so far beyond sex. He ignores his own erection, a byproduct of the act and not what Hannibal cares about in this moment.

Will holds up; it's beautiful. Hannibal feels *pride* in his chest and how worthy this little thing is to hold up under what usually has these slaves whimpering and either begging for mercy or begging to be fucked. They're usually so well trained, they know that they should feign desire rather than beg for mercy. A master is far more likely to be taken in by an act like that. Will, his little Will, with his little act and his innocent demeanor, put on as it is, does neither. Hannibal pauses, looking at the back of Will's head and he reaches across him, gripping the back of his neck and urging him to turn, to face him. He moves his head willingly and Hannibal is slightly disappointed to look into bright eyes, not reddened from tears but slightly watering, face unreadable. Will's face is not that of a slave close to his breaking point and Hannibal tilts his head and smiles and runs his fingers against Will's soft hair. This show of strength is almost beautiful, almost breathtaking, and Hannibal slips from the bed, moving to the chest to explore what implement he might be drawn to. Hannibal is aware of the cool air in the room, of the weight of gravity pulling heavy at his cock and he frowns at the presence of the erection now, so easy to ignore before. He shakes his head and removes the crop, sliding the length through his fingers and kneeling behind Will. Will's back is sagging slightly, perhaps more from the effort of time and gravity than evidence of his breaking point. Hannibal bends and tests the crop, running the tip of it down Will's back and Will is so *good*. He doesn't move, doesn't flinch and he's so sickeningly calm right now. Hannibal doesn't hold back and he swings, hard enough that the sound Will's flesh makes seems almost impossibly loud in this room and he swings again and again and Will's back is not merely pink but starting to spot with blood in places. Hannibal doesn't want to scar him, not *yet*, but he's aware of the limits of the human body, he knows what Will's skin can take. What he does not know, is how much *Will* can take and he strikes again and again, firm, confident and relentless.

It goes on for a long time and Hannibal actually finds himself lose track of its passage for minute moments here and there. He hasn't been this wrapped up in a body like this in far too long. He keeps going and he wants Will to cry out and he wants to witness tears and he *wants* more than he's wanted in some time.

Hannibal repositions Will's body, using stress positions and his own hands to push him further. He pushes him further than he thought he would have to but it's far longer than he could have guessed before Will's eyes are not simply wet and tearing from stress but from something *more*. Hannibal can tell real tears, he just knows that things are different, that

there's been a shift and he smiles and stops and something in the air changes entirely when that first sob makes its way from Will's throat.

Hannibal drops the crop he's been using across Will's thighs and he sits next to him on the bed, unclipping his wrists and pulling him onto his side. Hannibal runs fingers along Will's scalp, through the short hair there, and looks at him tenderly. How precious he seems right now. He feels something akin to *affection* for this slave, something he hasn't felt in a long time. He leans down and presses a kiss to Will's head and inhales deeply of Will's scent and Will is mewling and blinded by tears and he must not be aware of his own movements because he reaches out to Hannibal and Hannibal pulls him close. They sit tucked together, and Will cries and Hannibal smiles, smug victory, and knows that the first little piece has been broken through. It's only a matter of time until all of Will's walls are destroyed and Hannibal will have his fill of Will's mind and darkest parts and secret places.

Chapter End Notes

I really appreciate all the support for this fic :)

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Apologies for the wait (you can kick my ass if I leave you hanging for a week again). A nice looooong chapter to make it up to you all?

This fic is fully written (almost 80k!) and it's being betaed. Posting as it's reviewed!

As always a big cheer for endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal sleeps alone and soundly. He does not stir and he does not think about the unknown look on Will's face when he had sent him out of the room. He doesn't linger on it, there is plenty of time for that to come.

Hannibal wakes and goes about his day without concern for Will or wondering when he'll wake himself. He pauses outside Will's door before he leaves for work, *listening* to the silence. He turns the key in the lock and goes, heading downstairs and out of his house with a lightness to his step.

Perhaps another person would pause throughout their day, would stop to wonder and question what exactly is happening back at home, how their slave is coping with what happened last night. Hannibal focuses on other pleasures, the slow but inevitable breakdown of a particular patient, the joy of teasing another and seeing his crestfallen face. Hannibal has many small pleasures to occupy his mind. He doesn't linger on the thought of Will. He moves through his day and before he's aware of it, his last appointment is done and he's alone in his office, writing notes and thinking through his sessions and then he's done and without another choice, he's heading home.

The house is still quiet and dark and Hannibal wonders if Will is hungry, having missed a breakfast and a lunch. Perhaps Will has been curled in his bed all day, perhaps Will has pulled himself together and now holds his head high to cover the shame he might feel for sobbing so brokenly in his master's arms. Hannibal smiles as he ascends, silently up the stairs and turns the key in the lock as quietly as possible. Will is sitting on the bed, dressed and upright and staring at the wall. He turns to look at Hannibal as he enters, eyes raising ever so briefly to Hannibal's face. He doesn't react outwardly to reveal his emotional state one way or the other and for a moment Hannibal is disappointed. It would be far too easy if Will turned into a broken crying pathetic little creature after such a momentary break and it would make him far less worthy of Hannibal's interest too.

Hannibal smiles, forced as it feels, and opens the door wide. "I thought you would join me for dinner?"

It sounds too much like he's asking, as though Will has a choice. He didn't mean for it to sound that way but it was as though seeing Will brought all the thoughts he might have had about him throughout the day to the forefront of Hannibal's mind all at once instead.

Will follows him in silence, standing in the kitchen as Hannibal prepares their meal. He follows instructions in glum silence and Hannibal furrows his brow in annoyance as Will neglects acknowledging his order to set the table.

Hannibal wonders if Will is trying to provoke him and wonders how foolish Will must be to try it again so soon, to test his new boundaries. Is Will so unaffected by the previous evening's activities? Is Will so good at pushing down and ignoring the chink Hannibal has started to form in his Will's armour?

They sit together and Hannibal pours wine for himself and he hesitates over Will's glass before pouring him one too. "How was your day, Will?" He asks and he's surprised to get an answer.

"Quiet, boring mostly, master," Will's voice sounds off slightly and he clears his throat, reaching for his wineglass and sipping, eyes downcast. "How was yours master?"

Hannibal tilts his head and smiles. "Very good Will, I am pleased to have you take an interest." Hannibal cuts a piece of steak and waits, the silence hanging open and inviting.

"I am enjoying this meal though master, you are a very fine chef."

The conversation grows, slowly and stilted, and it is the unequal conversation of strangers on such different planes of existence. It is the beginning of something though, something Hannibal can sense and taste and almost touch. He watches Will chew and swallow and when Will looks up at him and catches his eye, he actually briefly *smiles* at Hannibal. It all feels...*normal*. It's far more mundane and domestic a scene than Hannibal could have predicted but it's a welcome change to Will's stoic silence.

"Tell me Will, what did you feel about last night?" Will pauses, his fork midway to his mouth and for a moment Hannibal fears he's overplayed his hand. Will stops, placing his knife and fork down so carefully positioned that it's clear he has been taught table manners from a young age.

"At first I wondered why, Master." Will picks up his glass and takes a swallow of wine. He looks up at Hannibal, holding his gaze with a confidence that makes Hannibal's heart skip a beat.

"And now?"

Will smiles and puts the glass back on the table, tilting his head down, looking up from under his lashes looking somehow both demure and cheeky. "I like that you enjoyed it because…." he pauses and smirks slightly. "I liked it, master."

It hangs for a moment in the air, Will looking smug and Hannibal's mind processing far too slowly. Any thought of Will opening up, showing his real insides is immediately on uneven

ground. Will is still acting, or is he? Perhaps *this* was the real creature all along? This disappointing little slut?

Will stands then, pressing his hands flat on the table as he pushes his chair backwards. Hannibal frowns at the slight scraping sound of the carelessly pushed chair and watches as Will leans forward.

”Sit down.” Hannibal cuts a piece of steak and puts it in his mouth, chewing slowly. Will smiles and leans forward, arching his back. “I said sit down Will, don’t make me ask you again.”

”You’re going to make me?” Will cocks a hip out to the side, leaning dangerously low to his plate and Hannibal glances down at it, briefly wondering how to punish Will if he gets sauce on his shirt. Hannibal shakes his head, snapping out of the momentary daydream, the image of Will’s bare ass in his mind. He’s no doubt sore, bruised. Why is he goading Hannibal now?

”Do you think this is what I want?” Hannibal makes sure to appear calm as he cuts another piece of meat, pausing to look Will in the eye before taking the bite from his fork and chewing.

Will’s face shifts, even larger eyed and even more of a false show of innocence. His voice is soft and breathy when he sighs and rolls his shoulders forward. “Oh master, I want to be a *good boy* for you, I just know sometimes you have to punish me to show me the right way to please you.” He flutters his eyelashes and Hannibal’s mouthful of steak loses any flavour it once had. Hannibal puts his knife and fork down and sighs.

”Quite the little show, sit *down*.”

Will doesn’t sit down. They stay frozen instead, regarding one another. Hannibal waits paradoxically with both the impatience of someone who is more than ready for his slave to do *something* new and the patience of someone who has played this particular game countless times before. He’s toyed with minds and danced these steps before. He’s enjoyed finding the sensitive and delicate parts of a person and the feeling of tearing into their softness, destroying it before devouring what’s left. He’s done every combination of it and played every variation of this game. He had hoped Will would be different, still hopes that perhaps he is.

Repetition can be boring, there are only so many ways to skin a cat and Hannibal wants something fresh, something exciting and exotic. He tilts his head slightly and looks into Will’s eyes. Will looks back at him, looking his master in the eye now but it’s all just a variation on the same theme. He’s this pathetic creature, a pet who wants to please and what frustrates Hannibal most is that he truly *does* want to be pleased. He wants Will to crawl to him, in this moment, wants Will to beg and whine and make the pretty sounds but he wants it to be real, wants it to be the real *Will*, under all this artifice and performance.

”Either you believe that this is what I want and that by requesting that I punish you, I will be pleased and therefore will ultimately go easy on you.” Hannibal sighs and breaks the eye contact, leaning back slightly and looking up at the painting on the wall behind Will. “Or perhaps this is the real you, and you are this creature, what they’ve turned you into is so

effective that you truly are…" Hannibal waves his hand. "...*this*." The word comes out laden with more distaste than he perhaps intended but when he returns his gaze to Will, he thinks that it might be exactly the right amount. Will falters, his pose and expression, everything he's been doing to exude sexuality and subservience and *lust* is lost, just for a moment, so fleeting. What is revealed is enticing, delicious and tempting. Hannibal smiles.

Will slides from his position, sitting back down in his chair and while he might be attempting to look natural, to continue to look at his master as the good little bed slave, it's different now and the edges of his act are there, visible. He bites his lip but it's not clear if it is an affectation or something he might be doing naturally, thinking. He picks up his knife and fork and slowly cuts a piece of steak, putting it in his mouth and chewing as though the last few moments haven't happened at all.

Hannibal returns to his own meal, silently devouring the last of his steak. He looks up to see Will chewing methodically as he looks down at his own plate. His brow is wrinkled slightly, thinking about what act to try next perhaps. Hannibal is glad of this much at least. He'd hoped Will was smart, had been so sure he'd seen intelligence in him.

"Tell me Will, did you enjoy serving your last master?"

Will puts down his knife and fork again, pausing just a fraction of a second too long before he looks up at Hannibal. "My last owner was a company, I worked in a slaughter house cutting pigs throats...Master."

"That didn't put you off eating pork now?" Hannibal smirks at the barely there flinch that Will just about manages to get under control and hide. "All that blood, many people can't bear to think of where their food comes from."

"I did what I was ordered to, master."

"Killing pigs?" Will doesn't answer but there's a stiffness to the way he holds his shoulders that makes Hannibal feel satisfied. "Tell me then, did you enjoy it? The blood? Do they knock them unconscious at Verger meats or did you get to hear them squealing?" Will's jaw tightens and he frowns down at his plate. His hands tremor, just a little and Hannibal knows he just needs to press the smallest fraction more to break skin.

"So Will, is that why you killed the other slave? Because you got a taste for it and wanted more challenging fare?"

"Hobbs attacked me," says Will, his voice barely above a whisper and he looks up at Hannibal with big eyes, looking for the first time, frightened and weak.

"Was it easy? Because of all your experience with the pigs?"

"It was fast and I didn't...I didn't *think* about doing it, it just happened."

"Did you get to enjoy it, the way you enjoyed killing the pigs?"

"I didn't enjoy killing the pigs." Will's voice takes a sudden hard edge and he frowns, determined and hard. He's got the kind of strength in his words that Hannibal has been seeking, that makes Hannibal *desire* him so.

"This is the slave I want," says Hannibal. He moves then, pushing his chair carefully back and straightening his jacket. He stands straight and looks down at Will. "I want to see you Will, I won't even punish you for forgetting to address me properly." Will's face falters again, losing that edge of strength for a moment. Hannibal moves around the table, slow even steps carrying him closer to Will and he stops to stand behind him, hand reaching out and resting on Will's shoulder. He feels the tightness of the muscle under the fabric and he presses his thumb in, moving his hands across Will's back and kneading and rubbing. He massages Will's shoulders methodically, working at the stiffness under his hands until he feels his slave's body slacken slightly.

Hannibal takes Will's hand from where it rests on the table, urging his slave to stand. He leads him from the room, slowly walking with his silent slave's wrist grasped gently in his hand. The house is so quiet and dark and Hannibal's body thrums with anticipation. He leads Will not upstairs to his bedroom but to his home office. It is not so grand as the one he maintains for his patients but it is all the more intimate for it. "Sit," he orders as he releases Will's wrist and sits himself. There is no table between them now, nothing to block the space between. Will hesitates before taking the other chair and they look at one another.

Hannibal smiles and crosses one leg over the other, picking at a small fleck of lint from his knee. "I am a psychiatrist Will, you can trust me, I'm a doctor. I will allow you to speak freely, entirely and completely, when we are in this room." He smiles then, not for show, not a reassuring gesture but entirely composed of his own pleasure. This is always his favourite part. He loves the chance to explore and pick through a human mind, take it apart and enjoy all the pieces. It will keep him occupied long enough. Once he understands how Will feels about taking a life and once he's reached his threshold of boredom from playing around in Will and his emotional life, he will move on to the next one. For now, Will's mind is where he wishes to explore.

"Tell me then my dear Will, do you enjoy lying with men?"

Will looks up at him, sharply and leans forward slightly, sitting uncomfortably on the edge of his chair and holding his hands tightly together. "I am a slave, master." Hannibal frowns at the re-emergence of the meek little creature.

"That is not what I asked, I desire an honest answer. Did you enjoy it when your previous masters *used* you?"

"Does it matter?" asks Will and he looks up at Hannibal with questioning and curious eyes.

"I suppose one might argue that it does not. As long as a slave can *act* appropriately, I imagine most owners would be satisfied *enough*."

"But not you, Master?"

"Ah, you and I both know that you don't really need to ask that question Will. There's no point in pretending, I am well aware of how talented an actor you are. You've had to be, to make it this long. No?"

Will smiles then, shaking his head slightly and he slides back in his chair, making himself a little more comfortable. "As long as they think you can't wait to have their dick in your mouth or your ass, most of them seem pretty happy." He smirks before suddenly transforming his face, pouting and pretty with fluttering eyes. His voice drops and it's low and he manages to sound so sinfully turned on when he growls his words. "Master, please, I've been such a bad boy." He sighs, shifting back in his chair and regarding Hannibal for a moment. When he speaks again, he sounds so different, so *normal*. "I think I'm too old to pull that off now."

"Oh?" Hannibal doesn't need to say it, he's sure Will is talented enough to read the way he's forced to shift his leg a little. There is something desirable in Will's act, even though neither is going to keep up the pretense of it being anything *other* than an act at this point in time.

Will's eyes flick down to Hannibal's crotch, momentary and almost imperceptibly, he smirks. He can't see anything from his angle but he must *know* that he's having an effect. He stands and moves towards Hannibal, prowling slowly.

Hannibal doesn't move, doesn't castigate Will when he reaches a hand and slides Hannibal's crossed knee off his leg, creating a space. He doesn't say a word, even when Will presses the heel of his hand to the front of Hannibal's trousers and feels the stirring of hardness that's started there. He doesn't move, doesn't dare to breathe as Will slides a knee onto the space beside Hannibal's open legs, he moves and slips close and straddles Hannibal's lap. Hannibal doesn't say a word when Will leans over him and touches his face, cupping his cheeks with both hands and leans close and kisses his master.

It's intimate. It's unusual, for a slave to kiss their master and even more strange for a master to kiss their slave. Kisses are saved for loved ones and no one cares about their slaves. Will kisses Hannibal like he means it and Hannibal lets him lead. He doesn't raise his arms to touch Will but rests them on the arm wrests of his chair and enjoys the attention.

Will pulls apart for a moment, breathing hot and damp, close to Hannibal's face. He kisses across Hannibal's cheek to his jaw and neck. He loosens Hannibal's tie and grazes teeth against skin.

Hannibal barely dares to breathe. He can't bear the thought of breaking this moment. Perhaps Will is at it again, playing into whatever it is he thinks his master desires. Hannibal so desperately wants that not to be the case and he feels almost pathetic in his desire for this to truly be Will's want. It's easier to just forget doubts and enjoy.

Will presses close, moving his hips in slow undulating movements, pressing firm against Hannibal and moving away, creating spaces as he shifts and wiggles his body. His breath feels so hot on Hannibal's neck and he'll even forgive the way Will has carelessly pulled his tie. There are more important things to worry about than wrinkled silk.

It carries on for a time period that neither could probably estimate if required to. It's too easy to get lost in sensation, especially when the outside is so quiet and still. The house has grown

so dark and the world outside so still. Hannibal doesn't move. It is Will who reaches and takes his hand by the wrist, placing it around himself, urging him to hold his slave. It doesn't take much prompting for Hannibal to dig fingers into flesh and feel the shudder through Will's back as he pulls the end of Will's shirt from his waistband and finds the bare skin beneath.

The office is not the place for this. Hannibal does not keep supplies here. He doesn't need everything, he doesn't need to tie his slave up or punish him. This is the type of behaviour he probably *should* punish. Perhaps he would punish it in another slave but now he doesn't particularly care about what he had planned. Now he wants to penetrate Will's body, wants to fuck him and feel him around him and he groans as Will rolls his hips again and he feels Will's teeth grazing his neck.

Hannibal slides a hand up Will's back, along his spine to his neck and his hair. It's too short to grab and he's frustrated by his inability to pull Will's head back by it. He slides his hand around the back of Will's neck instead, fingers slipping into the space between Will’s collar and skin. He squeezes, the bunching of his fingers pulling the collar tight around Will’s throat and delivering a hint of pressure enough that Will freezes in place, breathing hard. Hannibal moves his slave, manipulates his body so he can see his face. Will's eyes are wide and pupils dilated and he can't be that good of an actor. Hannibal smirks.

"I don't keep lubricant in my office Will."

Will pants for a moment, breathing shallow and eyes staring into Hannibal's. "Maybe I don't care."

"I do, and what you want doesn't matter."

Will's gaze drops and Hannibal misses the weight of him as he slides from the chair, slipping so easily onto his knees in front of Hannibal. He presses Hannibal's knees apart, sliding into the gap and he looks wickedly up at Hannibal and runs his hands up his master's thighs.

Hannibal watches as Will unbuckles his belt, slides his zipper down and works his pants down his hips just enough. He shifts his hips up a little to help Will work the pants part way down his thighs and he ignores the wrinkling of the fabric in favour of looking at the way Will bites his lip instead.

He is well aware of how talented Will is at this particular service. He knows that Will knows exactly what he is doing and he smiles as he watches Will reach forward and suck and lick him to full hardness. Hannibal allows his eyes to half close as he relaxes back against the leather of his chair, looking down his own torso to watch Will do his work.

He smirks as Will takes Hannibal to the back of his throat, eyes watering slightly as he swallows. Hannibal smiles at the way Will holds his hands behind his back, perfect posing for a well trained bed slave and as much as Will might try, there are habits that cannot be broken.

"Good boy," Hannibal murmurs and he realises how impulsive the praise was when he sees the way Will's eyes seem to smile, despite the cock in his mouth. He shouldn't praise so

easily, he shouldn't allow his slave to think he's doing a good job, he shouldn't hand such vital power over to a mere *slave*, especially one that Hannibal fears is already starting to get the better of him. There's no help for it though, especially as Will seems to know exactly all the moves, exactly which strings to pull and Hannibal might want to hold on, might have intended on holding back on his orgasm but he doesn't. He's coming and Will is swallowing it down and licking his lips and looking pleased with himself.

Will stands and he doesn't even attempt to hide the erection in his own trousers. Hannibal swallows and for a fleeting moment wonders how Will tastes. But that is not for a master to know. He might be able to do whatever he wants to his slave, but there are still some acts that he feels are forbidden. He lies in the chair for a few moments longer, allowing his body to recover. Will stands before him, looking down on him and perhaps he's enjoying his position of power, looking down on his master but no matter.

Hannibal stands and Will follows, silently, as he makes his way up the stairs. He turns as they pass Will's door and he watches as his slave lingers there. "No," says Hannibal softly and he beckons Will to follow him further to the master bedroom. If Will is disappointed by not having the rest of the evening to himself, he hides it well. Hannibal pulls him inside his bedroom, closing the door.

He ignores his slave for now, undressing and hanging each piece of clothing with care. He enters the bathroom and showers, warm and luxurious in the water. It gives him an opportunity to calm and collect his thoughts. It’s easier to think after an orgasm and easier still without Will in view. He must handle this carefully, must enjoy this opportunity to play with a somewhat worthy opponent. Will is surely going to fall apart like all the others, fall into line or so far out of it that he’ll have no choice but to end him. Before that happens, Hannibal’s fun must be had.

Hannibal smiles when he emerges from the bathroom dripping and steaming and sees Will still standing there, exactly as he'd left him. Will looks subdued now, attempting to contain some kind of nervous energy that Hannibal can sense in the air.

Hannibal rubs at his hair with the towel. He contemplates ordering Will to strip, to get on the bed, to start a *routine* between them. How does he want Will now? He knows he wants to do something and whatever that something is should be solely for his own enjoyment. He wonders how long without an orgasm it would take for Will to get irritable, angry. He’ll have to make sure Will gets no opportunity to masturbate.

He steps closer. Will is so still, but Hannibal can see his chest rising and falling, can see the way he blinks far too frequently. He leans close and sniffs along Will’s collar and savours not just the scent but how confused he hopes he makes his slave. He opens Will’s shirt, button by button. Another might tear the material off, show Will exactly who holds the power here, show him whose desires matter.

Hannibal slides the fabric off Will’s shoulders, allowing the shirt to fall to the floor. He watches Will’s chest move without obstruction and runs a finger around one of his nipples before pinching. Will flinches slightly but avoids gasping at the sudden pain. Hannibal squeezes tighter, twisting as he looks intently at Will’s face. Will doesn’t look back at him, he

gazes past him to some point behind but he can't hide the slight furrow between his eyebrows. Hannibal releases Will's flesh and turns his attention to the belt.

He's seen Will's body bare before but this time the bruises and marks are mostly his own doing. He circles him, running fingertips across his skin to admire the lines and bruises along his back. Will's skin holds its marks so beautifully and Hannibal presses his thumb against one of the stripes along Will's rump. He doesn't earn any gasp or sound, doesn't get to enjoy any of the audible pleasures he'd hoped for. Will is going to continue to be a challenge.

He can feel Will's gaze on him as he moves to the foot of the bed. He doesn't attempt to block Will's view of his collection of tools. He looks over his shoulder and catches Will's eye before Will is looking away, toward the wall again. He's not so composed as he'd like to let on and Hannibal can't help the smirk that fixes itself on his lips.

Will is still when Hannibal slips the blindfold across his eyes. It's silk, handmade and beautiful, and only the finest accessories would find themselves in Hannibal's bedroom. He enjoys the contrast of the silk against what was ultimately a bargain slave. Will wasn't purchased for his desirability, though Hannibal desires him. He wasn't purchased for his looks. They've started to fade from what most purchases look for. Hannibal has never been interested in the obsession with youth. Youth is fresh and innocent and while corrupting it can be fun, Hannibal grows easily bored with such games.

Will's self control seems weakened by the loss of his sight. He can't hide the subtle flinch under Hannibal's fingers as he touches his body. Hannibal moves behind him, pressing close and resting his chin on Will's shoulder as he runs his hands across Will's belly. Will can't control the slight tilt of his hips as Hannibal strokes his fingers lower and wrap around Will's cock. Will opens his mouth to breathe, panting slightly as Hannibal strokes him to hardness.

Hannibal stops his movements and leaves Will's cock hanging heavy. Will's hips move forward, chasing the feeling of Hannibal's hand but otherwise he stands still. Hannibal is momentarily impressed with Will's training, his hands have stayed hanging by his sides and Hannibal is almost tempted to call him a *good boy* for that.

Hannibal nips at Will's shoulder, pinching the skin between his teeth and stopping himself just short of biting deep enough to draw blood. He cups Will's balls and squeezes, not hard enough to properly*hurt* but firmer than if he intended it to be pleasurable. Will stands motionless and Hannibal licks across the top of Will's shoulder, towards his neck. He stops at the collar, reaching with fingers to touch the fine leather. It's stiff still, high quality and still shiny and new. It's *his* and denotes Will as such too.

He uses a hand at the base of Will's skull to guide his slave to move. Will's neck feels so fragile, so easy to snap and yet Hannibal doesn't really have the urge to break it. Will is pliant, he doesn't struggle but he does step uncertainly forward, blinded as he is.

Hannibal steers him towards the bed but he doesn't intend it for Will's comfort. He presses, sharp, swift decisive and Will loses his balance. Will sprawls awkwardly, hands part way up to catch himself before he resisted. His feet are out from under him, just his upper body supported on the bed and Hannibal can see the twitch of the muscles in his legs, under strain to stop himself sliding to the floor. Hannibal doesn't speak. He lifts Will's foot, one then the

other, planting each flat and lifting Will's hips until he gets the idea of how he should half-stand.

Hannibal moves away, taking a length of rope from his collection and tying first one wrist, then the other, looping them together behind Will's back. He makes quite the picture, laid out and bared on the bed. Hannibal runs his hands along Will's back, pausing to slap Will's buttock, hard. Will's chest slides a little on the bed and Hannibal moves to the side his head is turned to see better. Will's face is blank and while his eyes might be scrunched, Hannibal can't see behind the blindfold. The parts of Will's face that are visible are carefully held, a neutral expression and Hannibal is for a moment impressed with his slave's self control.

The marks and bruises on Will's body are still fresh enough, Hannibal could spend hours going over each line and recreating each mark in a slightly different form but he doesn't really want to. He wants to have Will and while it hasn't been that long since his orgasm, he reaches down and rubs himself in smooth determined strokes. He looks at Will's back and buttocks, he looks at the way the muscles in Will's thighs twitch and move occasionally, he admires the cant of Will's hips. Hannibal keeps touching himself as he slides a bare foot across the floor and uses his toes to nudge at Will's ankle. Will knows what to do and he widens his stance easily, baring himself more for Hannibal's view.

Hannibal picks up the lube from where he left it on the bed near Will and pours a little into his hand, enough to ease his strokes. It's cold but warms quickly and the erection is more work than before but it comes to him eventually, bidden more easily by the view in front of him.

Will doesn't make a sound, doesn't react when Hannibal pulls his cheeks apart. He twitches a little but otherwise stays still as Hannibal pours a drizzle of lubricant along his crack and over his hole. Hannibal runs his fingers along, wrinkling his nose at the hair and reminding himself to make a waxing appointment for Will as soon as possible.

He doesn't stretch him, not much. It's more to spread the slipperiness inside that he slides two fingers in. It's more to ease his own way than to make this *comfortable*. He'll enjoy it anyway, thinks Hannibal, it's what he's been trained for, what he's been *conditioned* for. Hannibal's thoughts are confirmed as he pushes the head of his cock inside and while there's resistance and it's *tight*, Will's body stays still but his cock doesn't. Will's erection doesn't soften all that much at the burn of the penetration and Hannibal reaches around, sliding his greased fingers along it briefly.

Will is so quiet as Hannibal sinks in, bottoms out and holds onto Will's hips tight. He feels the press of Will's warm buttocks against his own hips and he runs his fingers along the protrusion of bone where it's easiest to grip.

Hannibal doesn't need to search for a rhythm. He launches into thrusting in and out so easily, finding his pace and sticking with it, relentless. He tilts his head to watch Will's face, turned and pressed against the duvet and smiles as Will opens his mouth, gasping in breaths and yet managing to stay mostly silent.

Part of Hannibal wants to see Will fall apart in this, to come beautifully with his master's cock in his ass. He wants to hear him beg for an orgasm and make pretty sounds when he gets

it. Hannibal wants all of this and yet none of it at the same time. There are bigger goals to be had and while he wouldn't deny his own pleasure, he will happily deny the pleasure of his slave.

He reaches down to find Will's erection, hard and weeping and he slides down to cup Will's balls, squeezing slightly. "You won't come until I say you can," says Hannibal, voice thankfully not sounding as out of breath as he feels in this moment.

Hannibal works to his finish and he bucks swiftly, in and out. As he starts to come he presses forward, falling against Will's back, hands hitting the bed and Will's legs collapsing under the press of weight on top. Hannibal finishes inside and he freezes in place, breathing hard and enjoying the wave of his orgasm.

For the first time, he notices a very distinct movement from his slave as Will wiggles slightly under him, moving the dick still inside his ass. Hannibal grimaces as he pulls himself free and looks down at the mess between Will's buttocks. As the oversensitive feeling fades, he tilts his head to look at Will. He can see the awkward press of his hips as he moves slightly, rubbing his cock against the bed and Hannibal narrows his eyes at the movement. He has plans for this.

Will is less cooperative now, though not perhaps intentional disobedience but disorientation caused by lack of bloodflow to his brain. He rubs against Hannibal mindlessly, absently, perhaps not realising that he is not being so well behaved when this close to the edge. Hannibal steers him with a hand on his neck once more and Will walks slowly, uncomfortably, with his blindfold and bound hands. He doesn't speak, doesn't beg or ask when he'll get to come. He's either so far gone he can't or not so far gone that he's decided on his own to be this quiet well behaved little thing. Hannibal doesn't want a well behaved slave, he doesn't want one that misbehaves, he wants something that doesn't really exist and trying to make Will jump through those hoops is the game in and of itself.

Bringing Will to his room takes longer than it would normally but he cooperates and doesn't fight when Hannibal unties his wrists. Perhaps he's hopeful as Hannibal presses him down on the bed, perhaps he thinks something else is about to happen as Hannibal loops the rope through the bars at the head of the bed and binds Will's wrists.

Will lifts his hips slightly off the bed, pressing his erection up in the air and Hannibal watches dispassionately, for a while. He kneels on the bed, moving close as he presses against Will's side and leans to whisper. "Goodnight Will."

Hannibal is almost disappointed that Will doesn't cry out, doesn't beg for the orgasm he's been denied. Hannibal almost cares but he is himself sated and happy and he will sleep well tonight. He turns off the light and leaves Will in darkness as he retreats to the quiet sanctuary of his own room.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for the ongoing support of this fic. It really keeps me going and wanting to write new things when people enjoy my words.

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

I hope you enjoy.

As always, thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta.

A special shout out to EvilAdmin. Thank you for showing your support for my words, it means a lot to me. <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal feels no remorse in clearing his appointment schedule. He sees his patients not for money but to keep himself occupied. He has far more interesting things he'd like to occupy himself with at home right now and it is with thoughts of how he'd left Will tied that he had arrived at his office and started making phone calls. He didn't look in on Will the morning after he'd left him helpless and wanting. The image in his mind from the night before is fresh enough and the thought alone brings a smile to Hannibal's lips. Will might think he can manipulate the situation but he can't; every trick he tries, Hannibal will twist it around on him.

Hannibal isn't sure how much he'll play with Will in this small break from work. Perhaps he'll spend most of the time plotting what he'll get up to or perhaps he'll allow instinct to drive him, as dangerous a game as that might be.

Hannibal releases Will and orders him to clean and goes about appearing busy to his slave, disinterested and with far more pressing matters on his mind. His thoughts are preoccupied with Will though and he finds himself drifting to whatever room Will is cleaning at that moment.

Will seems quiet and withdrawn, back to playing the submissive meek creature and it's all so very dull and boring. Hannibal even begins to worry that he may have overplayed his hand. Has he pushed too hard and too fast? He would even take the flirtatious insatiable bed slave over this disappointment.

Hannibal almost hopes that Will is plotting something or perhaps that Will might even be embarrassed that he allowed himself to let go like that, especially in front of Hannibal, especially *with* Hannibal. He didn't quite let go to the extent that Hannibal would have liked though. Hannibal wants much more than simply sex. Will didn't scream and beg for sexual release and while that particular shortfall has left Hannibal himself *wanting*, it is the other hidden parts that increase Will's daily chance of surviving a little longer.

Dinner is an elaborate affair. Hannibal spends hours preparing the joint, basting it and creating the full and balanced flavour he's looking for. He does not invite Will to sit with him

and enjoy this meal though he does make up a plate for Will. He leaves it on the kitchen counter without any indication that it *is* for his slave. He sits in the dining room alone and thinks about how he'll punish Will for assuming the meal was prepared with him in mind. It's a trap, a cheap one, and yet Hannibal does it anyway. Being so petty and vindictive feels so pleasurable and he smiles as he chews a mouthful of this particularly rude patient.

Hannibal calls Will to him, not for any particular purpose but he wants to look at him. At the very least he can clear the table when Hannibal is finished. Will comes and stands, silent, *boring*. Hannibal studies him as he chews a mouthful of the tender meat. He nods towards the empty chair opposite, the spot where he had been so generous as to allow Will to sit and eat with him previously. Will doesn't move but he does frown with confusion, looking at Hannibal in askance. "Sit." Hannibal gestures with his fork to the empty seat opposite, *Will's* seat. The place setting is bare now, until Will starts being truly entertaining, he'll dine alone out of Hannibal's sight.

"Tell me Will, are you angry?"

"Master?" Will's voice is a surprising sound. He's been so quiet all day, trying to keep himself out of sight and out of mind.

"You must be feeling quite...frustrated." Hannibal smirks and Will looks awkwardly to the side, avoiding eye contact. Sitting as stiffly as he is, he appears like a shy child, one who has been caught doing something they shouldn't. Perhaps he's managed to sneak away to touch himself, Hannibal hasn't been watching all that closely. He thinks another slave might be trained enough to not go against his master's clear wishes. With Will, Hannibal can't tell. "I thought we were starting to get along so wonderfully, then you had to ruin it."

"*I* didn't plan on ruining anything, Master." Will says the words softly, almost under his breath and there's that hint of hard danger to his voice that Hannibal has been missing.

"You cannot win against me Will, I suggest you get comfortable, this will take as long as it needs to."

It's a long time before Will looks up. Hannibal waits, letting the silence settle and determined not to move from his position until Will speaks first. He doesn't want a platitude, doesn't want Will to attempt another charm offensive, to seduce and provoke a reaction from his master. It is the slave who will do the work.

"I just want to please you master, what can I do for you?"

The words would be a temptation if said in the voice of the slutty flirtatious sexual creature that Will had played before. It doesn't sound sexual at all now, just a simple statement, an offer to serve and it's not what Hannibal wants, though Hannibal himself might be hard pressed to describe *that*.

"Tell me about the slave you killed."

Will looks at him, around him, his gaze shifting from point to point and back to Hannibal's face. He looks at Hannibal, really studies him and Hannibal can feel Will's gaze on him as

though it were a physical touch. Will bites his lip but it's not the sensual movement of someone losing control or trying to tempt another into tipping over the edge. He furrows his brow and he's *thinking* and what Hannibal wouldn't do to see exactly that process right now.

"His name was Hobbs, I don't know if he had another, that's just what everyone called him." Will sighs and shifts back onto the chair, getting a little more comfortable it seems. He folds his arms and looks slightly sullen in his posture as he tilts his chin down towards his chest. "He took a liking to me and I defended myself."

"How did you do it?" Hannibal barely dares to speak but he must know, he wants to hear Will talk about it and he wants to know if *this* is the one he's been seeking. He doesn't want another who was only following orders or one who was falsely accused. He doesn't need another claiming self defence or an accident. Will tilts his chin up as he looks at Hannibal with a slight sneer on his face.

"A place like that, let's just say it's easy to get a blade. I needed it, I took it. It's a good thing I had it on me or maybe you wouldn't be enjoying my ass now master." His voice sounds so loaded with venom and he looks so vicious and beautiful and while Hannibal doesn't enjoy the story Will tells, he can see the danger just inside, the feral creature under the surface. Will might deny it but he's capable of so much *more*.

"Did you take the knife to kill Hobbs specifically?" Hannibal teases, ignoring Will's attempt at an insult.

Will shakes his head and hunches his shoulders slightly. "Nah, he wasn't the only one looking at me, just the most persistent."

Hannibal sighs as he sees the light going and Will closing off once more, going quiet and obedient as he relaxes his shoulders and straightens his back.

"May I clear your plate master?" And just like that the curtain comes up on the performance in front of Hannibal's eyes. He nods and watches Will moves around the table to take his empty dish.

Hannibal follows Will to the kitchen and he's almost disappointed to see the untouched plate of food. "You didn't eat," he says with a sigh at the cold meal and Will looks up at him, the disguise slipping just enough for him to smirk at Hannibal's face.

"I didn't know if it was for me, Master."

Perhaps the little dark creature is inside then, not too deep below the surface. Perhaps the edges of Will's act aren't so well hidden as he might think.

”What a waste, it’s not at as it’s meant to be enjoyed now.” Hannibal picks up the plate and moves to the trash can, tipping the contents into it in one fluid movement. He watches Will as he does it but there’s not even a flicker on Will’s face. If he won’t be tempted, he’ll just have to go hungry.

"Were you like this with your other masters?"

"Were you like this with your other slaves?" The transformation is sudden, beautiful. Will is standing there, dark and dangerous and *sharp* and feisty and so very lovely. It's fleeting though, so very brief before the wall is back up again and Hannibal can already tell that Will is working on building it back up again. Every moment he's given to reinforce those walls takes Hannibal further from truth and the depth he seeks. He smiles and shakes his head.

"You keep playing at what you think I want, but then you show me a glimpse of the real thing. You're not so good at playing as you think you are."

"Perhaps I'm just used to behaving a certain way, master."

"The only way you've survived this long?" Hannibal doesn't need to ask, they both know the answer. It's not very common for a pleasure slave to make it that long and those that do make it are kept on as pets. It's obligation more than anything else. Easier to sell on the old and get something new and shiny and pretty. To Hannibal though, Will *is* still new and shiny but with every little false smile and simper, every little tell that Hannibal isn't seeing the full picture, takes that luster away. Perhaps Will won't be so new and interesting for very long after all.

"I found you interesting, when I read your file. It's in your best interests that *I continue* to be interested."

Will nods, mute. While he plays at being obedient, Hannibal can still see that anger in his eyes and if only Will would show him *that*. The hard fought victory will be all the sweeter though and he turns and beckons Will to follow him.

Will hesitates at the doorway to Hannibal's office and Hannibal turns, eyebrow raised. "Will?"

"I'm sorry master," he says softly and he bows his head and enters the room. Hannibal frowns at the presentation as he sits in his chair. He waits for Will to sit but he doesn't, staying standing near the door. Hannibal can wait longer and he does, he doesn't want to take a step backwards, he wants to see *more*.

"So Will, I take it you are still angry, frustrated even?" Will looks up for a moment then returns his gaze to the floor. "Sit," says Hannibal, an order said more forcefully than he probably needed to but even he does not have boundless patience.

Will moves slowly, sits opposite Hannibal. He fidgets and looks around and Hannibal can't quite see the edges of the act right now. The thought of that exhilarates him and he smiles at the thought that this might be a version of Will even closer to reality. "Tell me Will, are you still angry? Or is it frustration from, shall we call it, *denial*."

"Master?" Will's voice is barely above a whisper and he looks up at Hannibal. His eyes are large, with concern the most obvious feature across his face. It's the false Will to the fore and Hannibal frowns at the sight.

"In this room, you will speak the truth to me. If you truly wish to give me what I *want* as your master, you will give me *this*."

Will sits back in his chair, shifting again and it's all so sudden it could make one's head spin. Will is a shifting mirage, how many different versions of him is he hiding and he reveals another side that Hannibal hopes is close to the real thing once more. "I had plenty of opportunity to take care of things myself."

Hannibal smiles. "Did you?"

Will looks at him, eyes narrowed and oh what Hannibal would give to know exactly what he's thinking.

"No...*Master*." Will manages to imbue the word with so much scorn, so much derision. Hannibal feels something in his chest akin to pride.

"Why not?"

Will shrugs and then he smirks at Hannibal, sudden and mischievous and there's something much more desirable about that simple expression than any of Will's prior coquettish simpering. "I was trying to be *good*."

"By whose definition?"

"Ah, now there's a question," says Will thoughtfully and already Hannibal can sense this is far more the conversation of equals than perhaps either of them intended. "What would you call a good slave? I'm starting to get the feeling you don't want what others would consider a *good slave*."

"Some want a slave to be *bad* precisely because they enjoy punishment. For them the good slave is in fact a disobedient one."

"Are you a sadist, master?"

Hannibal laughs. Something about the question, rhetorical as it is and so pointless to even ask. It doesn't matter what *he* is. "I'm your master, that's all you need to know of *me*."

"You don't want me to ask questions, to sound impressed?" Will tips his head back and looks at the ceiling, apparently unaware of how delicious the tilted angle of his neck looks. He seems unaware of the bruise along his jugular that Hannibal himself had put there. It's dark but fading faster than Hannibal would like; he'll need to create some new ones.

"I want you to be interested in what interests you, genuinely Will. Anyone can buy a slave to act out their fantasies." Will looks back at Hannibal, sadly hiding the bruise under his chin from view. Hannibal can feel him studying him. He wonders what exactly Will is thinking but he waits.

"I don't know if any master has ever been particularly *interesting*." Will keeps his expression blank but it's not clear if it's through a lack of emotion on the subject or perhaps if he is hiding his genuine feelings on the subject.

"I find most people somewhat interesting, slave or free." Hannibal looks away from Will as he muses, the thoughts rolling off his tongue so easily. "I find people with internal darkness

particularly interesting. It's the darkest members of society, the lowest and lowliest that often have the most interesting internal lives."

"Like slaves?" Will's voice holds a note of true curiosity and it makes Hannibal smile. Perhaps he's hooked Will after all.

"Yes, I enjoy slaves, hence my purchase of you."

"But you don't have any other slaves, it's a bit odd for someone like you with a house like this not to have *any* slaves.

"I grow bored easily."

Will shrugs. "So when you're bored with me, what is it? Back to the sale, gifted to another?" Will looks at him tilting his head and Hannibal watches as the edges of Will's mouth turn up slightly. "Oh, of course," he whispers and perhaps Will is just as perceptive as Hannibal had hoped. Perhaps Will is indeed worth his time after all.

”You’ll have to wait and see, I suggest you continue to be interesting.”

Will shakes his head, looking down at his hands. “So you want a performance, you want me to *entertain* you, even though I don’t know what you want.”

Hannibal smiles but Will doesn’t look up to see it. “Now you’re getting the idea Will.”

Will is quiet, contemplative, and their conversation fizzles unsatisfactorily. Will is thoughtful, distracted, and perhaps he’s processing what’s been said, planning some new version of his act to tempt Hannibal into keeping him alive. Perhaps Will is not though, perhaps he has some other end in mind. Perhaps Will is happy with the status quo or perhaps he’s not. None of it particularly matters to Hannibal.

He sends Will to bed alone, to sleep, and hungry. Perhaps Will is going to touch himself. Hannibal didn’t explicitly forbid it but the implication was certainly there. If Will touches himself and leaves any evidence of such, Hannibal can punish him, but he’s also certain that dear Will is too smart to leave anything to show it.

Hannibal goes to bed alone without taking any advantage of Will’s body. His room is so quiet and he’s not particularly bored and he contemplates taking his entertainment with Will regardless of how it might affect his plans with Will’s mind. It’s what he’s there for after all and yet the more logical part of him knows that he must play his game delicately. He doesn’t want to end so soon and yet it seems poised to tip. It’s far too quick to be satisfying, especially with Will.

Hannibal thinks back over previous *experiments*. They’ve been fun, some more than others. They’ve even held his interest, some longer than others.

Hannibal can’t sleep, not yet, so he opts for a shower, the hot water a temptation of a different sort. He strips off and the bathroom is cooler than he’d like but it just contrasts so

wonderfully with the steaming water when he turns it on. He stands and allows the water to rain down on him, turning the flow up a little higher so that it almost stings.

He allows his mind to wander, thinking if anything of the warmth in his back and shoulders than what has happened today, what will happen tomorrow. He absently rubs at his chest and reaches for the soap, lathering up concentric circles on his torso.

The lather runs away down the drain, chased by the cooling water and Hannibal frowns as he notices the drop in temperature. Perhaps he has been in here longer than he thought. He decides against a shower wank and turns the water off instead. He towels his hair, his shoulders and chest, scrubbing at his skin roughly, drying each drop. He rubs at the back of his neck and tilts his head at the faint noise and narrows his eyes slightly. He doesn't bother to dress, just drops the towel along the way and stalks out of his room and down the darkened hallway. The key in the lock glimmers slightly and Hannibal holds his breath as he turns it, quietly as possible.

Will doesn't hear him, not above the sound of the shower and Hannibal moves across the room, slightly damp bare feet leaving footprints on the wooden floor. The door to the ensuite bathroom is ajar and Hannibal nudges it open, thankfully it doesn't squeak and he enjoys a full minute of admiring Will's naked back through the glass shower partition.

Will leans against the shower wall and he has his head tilted back, letting the water hit him square in the face. It seems that Hannibal has not been the only one who couldn't sleep and he moves closer, smiling as he waits for Will to notice that he is no longer alone. It's the old familiar sensation of stalking prey and for a moment Hannibal imagines the look of life leaving Will's eyes as Hannibal strangles him. Perhaps he'd be prettier bleeding out, perhaps that particular look would be more satisfying and Hannibal shakes his head to clear it, focusing instead on the reality of the living being in front of his eyes.

Will does look up, eventually, suddenly. He seems so startled and he turns so quickly that for a brief moment Hannibal worries about him slipping and hurting himself. The thought amuses Hannibal, especially considering how little he minds hurting Will himself. Will stands under the water, watching him and Hannibal steps forward, sliding back the glass and stepping into the shower, crowding Will against the tile wall. It becomes clear what Will has been up to, his dick hard and Hannibal smirks at the sight. "Couldn't resist?" he asks but he doesn't wait for a response. He reaches forward and grips the base of Will's cock, hard enough to make Will make a pained gasping sound. It's beautiful and Hannibal looks down at where his hand holds Will's flesh and sees Will's hands rise up, impulsively, to stop him. Will lowers them, intentionally and finally.

With Will so close to losing control and Hannibal himself feeling so *frustrated* something inside him seems to snap and it's not pure anger or hatred, it's not just merely the frustration of boredom or the lack of breakthrough with Will, it's something else that makes him press Will against the tile wall so roughly. He's snapped with other slaves, with varying degrees of consequence but this feels so much more *raw*. "This is *mine*," he growls and he digs the fingers of one hand into Will's hip as he squeezes Will's dick. He turns Will, sliding his nails against wet shower-heated flesh, pressing the front of Will's body against the shower wall. He reaches between Will's legs, poking a finger roughly against Will's anus but not hard

enough to breach. "And this," he growls. For a moment he thinks of entering Will, like this. It would hurt him, hurt them both most likely but something in him wants to *claim* and *own* so badly. He can feel his own feral nature near the surface and he leans close to Will's ear. "You're *mine*," he snarls and Will doesn't answer, gone all still like a frightened little rabbit. Will remains quiet and all of it builds to make Hannibal *angrier*.

Hannibal's anger is a dangerous thing, something Will should not be so keen to raise. Will should be more cooperative if he wants to survive a little longer but then again, maybe this is what he wants too? The thought of Will manipulating him arouses him and enrages him in equal measure and Hannibal finds himself shaking, losing control in a way he'll probably feel ashamed of in the morning. He presses close to Will and he wants to possess and own Will right now, wants to fuck him and use him and he doesn't care about the consequences.

He's pressing against Will, rutting his erection against Will's lower back and biting flesh that must be Will's shoulder but he's hardly *thinking* right now. He reaches for his dick and strokes and for a moment he tries guiding it to Will's ass but water is no lubricant and while Will isn't doing anything to resist, he's not exactly *cooperating* now. Hannibal doesn't try to hold on, doesn't think but he's rubbing himself and clawing at Will's body and stroking faster and he's coming on Will, hard and ecstatic. Will doesn't move and Hannibal looks at down at his come rinsing away off Will's back and he's falling down from the edge that he no longer feels *aroused* in the way he had just moments ago.

The only thing that lingers is the anger and Hannibal reaches for the tap, turning the water off and looking at the lack of evidence of his ownership claim, rinsed away by running water. Bruises are nice but there was something far more biologically motivated in marking Will with his own bodily fluids. He lets go of Will but Will doesn't move, staying pressed against the shower wall. Hannibal isn't sure why, but he's let go of what others might call inhibitions. What others hold back due to their nature, Hannibal hides to avoid arousing suspicion. His person suit is his armour against discovery. Not having to keep up appearances is one of the things Hannibal enjoys most about owning slaves. He wants to, so he does and he releases his hold on his bladder, relieving himself against Will. It hits Will’s thighs but he doesn't move, doesn’t react. Will stays facing the wall and Hannibal glowers at him as he pisses, angry still and thinking that perhaps this might at least alleviate his rage enough not to kill Will too quickly.

He finishes and shakes himself and he opens the shower door, reaching for a towel. He doesn't speak and neither does Will. Hannibal dries his hair and looks at his slave, standing hunched, back to him and facing into the corner and unmoving. He doesn't even seem to react to what Hannibal has just done and Hannibal suddenly wants to know, *needs* to know. He reaches an arm and grabs Will's shoulders and turns him and looks down at Will's dick, soft now and something about that just makes Hannibal angry all over again. He doesn't like this feeling, doesn't like this loss of control, of knowledge of what is going on. He doesn’t even look at Will’s face, doesn’t care about whatever act Will is going to try to execute next.

Hannibal turns, leaving the bathroom, leaving Will's bedroom, before he can think too long on what he's done. He locks Will's bedroom door and while he knows this was not in his grand *plan* and that the insatiable spontaneous part of himself does not like being denied, he regrets it all the same.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your support of this fic.

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

> A huge thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion who is making amazing progress betaing this fic!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal doesn't have any appointments scheduled. He knows it the moment he opens his eyes and he thanks himself for this planned bit of freedom. His mind immediately moves to Will. He doesn't have any reason to escape Will's presence but he knows that he doesn't wish to be away from his slave. He's at once torn between wanting to stay and escape. He sighs and covers his eyes and while he's normally up and out of bed without hesitation, today he lingers.

He showers, more from a sense of necessity than a desire to clean his body. His last shower is far too fresh in his memory and he wonders if Will showered after Hannibal left him. He must have but Hannibal isn't so sure any more. The one thing he didn't want was to totally break Will. He's toyed with mentally weak slaves before, they snap apart and splinter and crumble and it's almost mercy that has Hannibal dispose of them. He does not want that for Will, not just yet.

He sighs and dresses, suit and tie and knows that he needs to get out of the house. He's not sure why Will is making him react this way but he doesn't like it, doesn't like feeling out of control like this. Whatever Will has played with, he'll soon learn not to tempt fate when it comes to his current master.

Hannibal unlocks Will's room, opening the door a fraction but not entering. "I'm making breakfast, I expect you to join me." He leaves and moves down the stairs to the kitchen and starts cooking what should be a nourishing protein scramble.

Hannibal has none of his *special* meats available, so distracted as he's been by Will lately. He cooks Will a delicious breakfast because he has not eaten in a day and if anything he wants Will more filled out, not thinner than he is now. He doesn't do it from some kind of guilt. Hannibal doesn't feel guilt, of that he is sure. He plates up the dish and looks up as Will enters the kitchen, right on time. Will is dressed neatly, under the circumstances. The clothes are still oversized and sloppy on him. He's shaved but it's not perfectly clean and tidy, not without a proper razor. Hannibal won't trust him with one, not yet, not until he knows he *can* be trusted. He doesn't reflect what Hannibal wants him to reflect and it's an easy decision made without much conscious thought. "Eat up, we are going out today."

They eat in silence, facing one another and Hannibal doesn't feel the need to engage Will in conversation. He tells himself that there is no need for him to feel so *odd* this morning, not

about last night, and yet he can't help but feel off balance and out of sorts. It's been quite some time since one of his slaves made him feel this way. He may not even have felt this way because of another at all, not just his slaves, his other experiments. Free persons are more hassle than they're worth, too many questions raised and strange looks. No one asks about a number of broken, destroyed, and disappeared slaves; that kind of thing is expected, it’s no effort at all to turn a blind eye.

Hannibal takes their dishes, ignoring Will's furtive move towards the dirty plates and he loads them into the dishwasher and leaves the rest of the mess for later. If he’s feeling particularly magnanimous later he might call his usual maid service and free Will from cleaning up. He takes his coat and puts it on, turning when he senses Will's presence behind and eyes him carefully. Hannibal's own coats will be far too out of place on Will and he doesn't wish to put his own finery on a *slave*, even if it's Will. He frowns and plucks a scarf from the closet, wrapping it around Will's neck with more tenderness than he should. It's a movement so akin to one he's taken in such a different context, the human neck is so weak and fragile, be it rope or piano wire or razor wire or any number of materials wrapped around it.

Hannibal shakes his head to clear the image, briefly wondering how long he must resist the lure of taking Will's life before Will finally gives up the darkness Hannibal seeks. He looks down at Will's shirt and shakes his head again but for different reasons. The first stop will be clothing then.

Will follows him outside, shivering in the cool air and Hannibal motions him into the passenger seat of his car. Most people had slaves to drive them or made their slaves sit in the back. If you had enough of them, you might even have a slave compartment in the rear of your vehicle. Hannibal finds the whole notion rather silly. Slaves are more more fun when you enjoy them as you should, closer to freemen, just ones that he can hold total control over without questions being asked of him.

Will is silent as Hannibal drives, he looks out the window and Hannibal finds that he doesn't feel angry about Will's lack of attention, though perhaps he should. While Hannibal does indeed wish he had Will's undivided attention, he'd prefer it was earned, it will be much more satisfying that way.

Hannibal debates which of his favourite stores to take Will first but settles on the right one quickly when he remembers what happened to the better tailor in one particular establishment. One being a talented tailor didn't give one the right to be so *rude*.

Hannibal parks and gets out of the car, not telling Will to follow but knowing, *hoping* that he will. He does. They enter the store and it's all greetings and old friends and so easy like this. Hannibal shakes the owner’s hand and he sends his slaves to work, moving Will and measuring him as Hannibal lists what he needs. Will is like a doll in their hands and Hannibal watches from the corner of his eye as the two slaves stand him still and measure all the aspects of his body. Will seems distant, staring and not reacting to the hands on him. He seems too close to how number four had looked, right when he was broken, right when Hannibal had no choice but to *dispose* of him. That particular killing had been a disappointment, there was no life left to leave him by the time he met Hannibal's blade.

Hannibal remembers their names but they cease having meaning to him once they're gone. To the world they are a slave number, to Hannibal a number in a sequence. They were only a name when they were living and breathing and *entertaining* and even then they didn't possess those names; it was a gift that Hannibal bestowed, easily taken away in death. It will be the same situation with Will, eventually.

Will doesn't need that many changes of clothes, they'll just be a waste, ill fitting and unworn in a drawer *afterwards* but Hannibal can't help but pick various fabrics and combinations. He wants Will to look his best. He pays in advance and it amuses him to think that the clothing is costing as much as Will himself had.

Will follows him, silent and timid and perhaps spending money on him *is* a waste if this is how he's going to be. Hannibal gets into the car and starts the engine, turning to look at Will.

Will stares out the windscreen and Hannibal sighs. "You don't know what *I* want and I am hard pressed to understand what you desire Will." Will turns to look at him, his brow creasing for a fraction of a second before his face is once more blank and neutral.

Hannibal pulls the car out of his parking spot and starts down the road to their next destination. "I am a patient man, Will, but not so patient as to wait endlessly."

"You didn't," says Will, softly, turning to look out the side window and Hannibal narrows his eyes as he watches for the next turn.

"Don't forget your place," he replies, bringing the car to a stop and watching the traffic light. "I *own* you, Will, anything you desire is inconsequential."

"So why do you want to know?" Hannibal turns away from the lights to look at Will, looking right back at him, defiant. Hannibal feels a wave of arousal at the vision, the hint of *emotion* from him. Perhaps Will isn't as close to the edge of breaking as Hannibal had feared.

"I am your master, my desire is all that matters and if I wish to fulfil yours, it will be because I desired it." Hannibal smiles at Will, softly and tenderly and for a moment he feels warmth towards his slave. He's treated him far more roughly than he's treated any of the previous ones, at least in the beginning. It's still so early in their relationship and yet Will just can't stop provoking him.

The light changes and the rude driver behind honks his horn and Hannibal puts the car in gear and drives, taking them ever onwards. They drive in silence but it feels more relaxed, just a bit. Perhaps Will is finally understanding his place, perhaps he'll finally stop trying to act a certain way, stop making Hannibal *angry*.

Will doesn't comment when he sees where Hannibal has taken him but he does raise one eyebrow. The motion makes Hannibal smile at him. Will seems relaxed, the way he's seen glimpses of him before. Hannibal is sure that this one must be the real and genuine Will and he leads Will into the salon.

He stays in the treatment room and watches as the trained slave quickly and efficiently works. Most owners don't care to watch but Hannibal wants to see this. If asked, he couldn't

explain exactly why but he's both unsurprised and disappointed that Will doesn't react much to the removal of his body hair.

Will has been in private ownership before and depending on tastes, at least one or most likely more had preferred their bedmate to be bare.

Hannibal watches as the small, silent, female slave quietly bows and exits the room, her task complete. Hannibal moves close and inspects Will's body. Will lies still, looking up at Hannibal. He's naked but he doesn't seem to care, afterall, how many contexts has Hannibal seen this body in before. Hannibal runs his fingers down Will's chest to the spot where the top of his pubic hair trail started before. The skin is hot, red, *inflamed*. Will shivers and Hannibal licks his lips.

"When we get home," he whispers and Will nods at him, wide eyed and silent and he has to force his desire down for a moment to consider that it's too similar to the simpering little obedient slave come out to play once more. No matter, he'll see what version he's dealing with when they're home.

They drive in silence and Hannibal contemplates what to do when they return. There are many scenarios, mostly to do with Hannibal enjoying the newly smooth expanses of Will's body. However, by the time he's pulling the car into the drive, the mood has passed him by. He doesn't question it, instead going to the kitchen. He bypasses the mess from this morning and looks into the fridge and wonders what he should make.

He has no meat, at least not the kind he prefers. So distracted he's been lately and he shakes his head and goes to his recipe box to select something he can make with beef. Will hovers near the doorway, apparently expecting Hannibal to *do* something. Hannibal sighs and turns and looks at his slave, really studies him. He can't quite decide what Will is up to right now and that makes him feel uncomfortable. The anger has fizzled out somewhat, replaced by dull frustration.

"You know, you're not my first slave."

"I gathered that much, Master."

"I should punish you for that attitude." Hannibal begins to take out the cutting board, selecting a knife from the block and laying out his equipment.

"Will you?"

"Do you want me to?" Hannibal enters the pantry and plucks items from the shelves one by one. He returns to the kitchen counter and lays the items out before looking up at Will. Will tilts his head at him, narrowing his eyes slightly.

"Do you answer every question with another, master?"

Hannibal laughs then, he can't quite help himself and any worry he'd had of Will breaking, of being *boring* is gone. He might be *frustrating* but that seems to be half the pleasure of this

particular slave. “Only when I’m curious,” says Hannibal simply and he begins chopping the onion.

Will watches him cook but Hannibal doesn’t mind. He can sense his silent audience, studying each move and following each step. Hannibal doesn’t mind an appreciative viewer, one who at least understands that this is more than simply a passing task but one worth studying so closely.

Will follows him silently as he carries plates to the dining table, sitting and waiting as Hannibal returns to the kitchen for the cutlery and glasses. He opens a bottle of wine and pours two glasses and doesn’t even bring up the punishment that Will deserves for not preparing the table ahead himself.

They eat in companionable silence and Hannibal catches Will’s gaze on him, now and then. He doesn’t mind being studied like that, enjoys the idea of this not being simply a one sided transaction. He smiles as he chews and watches Will’s throat as he swallows, his neck moving against the leather collar that marks him as belonging to Hannibal.

Dinner is nice and while they don’t talk, Will doesn’t try any strange or odd acts, he seems perfectly fine to look at Hannibal openly, to act as though they are simply two normal people enjoying a dinner. It’s almost as if they are equals and while Hannibal is very aware of how unequal they are, he doesn’t mind Will acting this way for the time being.

The meal is over too quickly, followed by the bottle of wine and Hannibal wants to enjoy Will’s newly hairless state but he also feels bone deep tiredness that he hasn’t felt in some time. He leads Will up the stairs and to his own bedroom and Will looks at him, head tilting slightly, baring his neck and making it easy for Hannibal to see the fading bruises that are still there. Hannibal strips bare and Will does too without prompting and while Will looks so very delicious, so very tantalising right now, Hannibal doesn’t want him, not in that way.

He climbs into the bed and Will hesitates near the door. “Come here,” says Hannibal and pats the bed beside him. Will moves slowly, walking around to the far side of the bed and lifting the sheets and sliding in next to Hannibal.

Will is stiff at first as Hannibal turns him, spooning up against him. Will is warm and solid, real human flesh living and vital. Hannibal presses his nose to the base of Will’s neck and scents his sweat and the leather of his collar and the uniqueness of Will and he smiles. Time for dreams of Will to envelop him and he pulls his arm around Will’s belly firmly, pressing them close. He smiles as he feels Will’s body relax slightly, growing lax in his arms as they both fall asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for your kudos and amazing comments, this typically neurotic writer appreciates you all <3

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

Don't get *too* comfortable ;)

As always, thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal spends the rest of his week finding a routine with Will. It's quiet but not uncomfortably so and while Will doesn't open up to the level that Hannibal wants, he seems open to conversation. Hannibal can't quite say how honest the conversation is but it's a dialog and for now, it will do.

Perhaps Will's cooperation stems from the uneasiness in not knowing when the Hannibal of before will reappear. Hannibal hasn't used Will sexually, not roughly, not gently, not at all. His method of use has been quite different.

He brings Will to his bed each night but mostly just to sleep. He's tempted, so sorely tempted and he wants to use his body but he resists the urge. He tells himself it is for his own benefit, long term at least. He knows though, that it is really for Will, to grow this relaxed comfort between them, to build up this rapport. Perhaps even to plaster over the impulsive mistakes of the beginning.

Sleeping with Will in his bed feels oddly intimate, in a way that Hannibal doesn't particularly care for. Something about it brings discomfort, one that Hannibal presses past. The slaves he's purchased are a distraction and while he's allowed them to sleep in his bed before, it always came after other activities. Will seems to be a unique case.

Hannibal still feels a spike of the bubbling rage whenever Will doesn't quite react or speak how Hannibal would like him to. Sometimes Will doesn't seem as talkative as Hannibal would like but he resists the desire to grab his neck or slap his face or *worse*. He has to remind himself daily that it hasn't been that long, that despite the odd way Will has managed to get under his skin, he's still a very newly acquired slave.

The dinner before the day Hannibal has decided he'll return to work is an elaborate affair. Hannibal had accepted the delivery of the first of Will's new clothes and sent his slave upstairs with them while he prepared the meal. He misses the audience but there is also something to be said for the privacy of just him alone in his kitchen with food.

He pours wine for himself and drinks as he cooks and he feels happy and relaxed in a way he doesn't wish to examine too closely.

He looks up when Will enters and he smiles in approval at the charcoal grey trousers and white shirt. He looks so perfect, crisp and put together, and he nods at Will. He pours a glass of wine and offers it out to him and Will accepts it. Will sits on one of the stools and watches Hannibal work and if not for Will's collar this would probably look like a very normal and *equal* domestic scene to the outside observer.

"Pork loin," says Hannibal as he heats the pan and looks up at Will. "I've been marinating the meat since this morning." Will nods and sips his wine, watching Hannibal remove the meat from the dish and place it into the pan with a sizzle.

Hannibal looks forward to returning to work tomorrow but not because he misses his patients or his practice. It is simply that his career offers him an easy excuse for hunting and while the piece of pork in the pan is a fine cut and the porcini mushrooms currently soaking will make a fine accompaniment, they would go so much better with a different kind of pig.

He moves swiftly, confidently and the ease with which cooking has always come to him can be no more apparent than how he perfectly seals the pork before lifting the pan and sliding it into the oven.

"You like pork, master," says Will, thoughtfully.

"It is a delicious meat, one that is overlooked by many in favour of chicken or beef. There are many delicious meats to try out there Will, why settle for just one or two?" He makes his sauce of mushrooms and shallots and cognac and delicious flavours, tasting as he goes and smiling at the balance of herbs he's achieved. He looks up at Will and notices his near empty glass and reaches for the bottle of wine.

"Your new clothing is nice," he offers as he pours another glass for Will and then tops off his own. Will slides from the stool to stand, presenting himself to Hannibal's view. Hannibal evaluates Will, eyeing the line of the shirt into the waistband of Will's trousers and he smiles at his own good taste in both clothing and slaves.

"Thank you master, I like them." Will sits back down, lifting his glass for another sip and Hannibal is briefly amused by the thought of getting Will *drunk*. He turns the saucepan low and begins clearing his work area, the bulk of his work done on this particular meal.

Hannibal finds his mind drifting to Will's other clothing, things he's worn before provided for him by *other* masters. The thought of someone else possessing Will makes him feel irrationally angry and Hannibal does not like that feeling. He knows Will has been owned before, knows he's been used before but Hannibal doesn't care to think of it. He's prodded other slaves, delved into their pasts, and while he wants to know more of Will's past, it is his internal life he cares to learn of, *not* what others have done to him.

Perhaps Will knows of what he's thinking and wishes to anger him or perhaps he's trying to appease him. Whatever it is, Will puts his glass down and says in a surprisingly confident voice. "These are far nicer clothes than I've been given before."

"You're welcome," says Hannibal and he thinks he manages to hide the edge of irritation from his voice but not necessarily from his posture. He looks at Will and sees the fleeting

worry disappear from his face, replaced by a rather sweet smile.

”When I was younger, a lot of them really liked me dressed as a girl. I didn’t like that.” Hannibal shrugs and takes out two plates, placing them next to the oven as he checks the timer for the pork. “No, I mean, I just...thank you, master.” Hannibal sighs and turns back to look at Will. Perhaps Will really is trying with him.

”You are rather *pretty* Will.” Hannibal isn’t sure if he means the words to hurt Will or not but if they do, Will hides it perfectly.

”Perhaps, or perhaps they were trying to run away from their own desires by pretending I was a *girl*. I didn’t like that master.” Will picks up his glass of wine and swallows as if nothing is wrong. Hannibal closes his eyes, trying to remove the image of his hands going around Will’s throat and *squeezing*.

”So you didn’t hate all of them,” he mutters. He opens his eyes to look at Will. Will tilts his head, smiling and evaluating and Hannibal doesn’t appreciate feeling so *observed* like that.

”Yes,” says Will simply. “Not all of them were complete bastards but they were all ultimately the type of person who wants to own a human being.”

”I don’t particularly care to discuss the history of slavery with you Will, or its merits or demerits as the case may be.” Will shrugs and finishes off the glass of wine, reaching for the bottle himself without asking to pour another.

”You’re not going to ask if I like *you*.”

Hannibal shakes his head and turns to the oven, opening it and inhaling the scent of perfectly cooked pork. He slides it out and moves quickly to stand the meat to rest and prepare his plates and garnishes. It’s easy to slip back into the mode of chef and ignore Will’s comment. Does he even *care* if Will *likes* him? He tells himself it doesn’t matter in either case as he slices the meat and creates two perfect portions.

He carries the plates and Will carries their glasses and Hannibal smiles as he evaluates just how much of the bottle Will has finished on his own. They sit and eat and Hannibal closes his eyes to savour the first mouthful and fully appraises the taste and texture of this particular recipe.

”This is delicious master, does this dish have a name?” asks Will, thankfully after swallowing. Will’s table manners were already good but they seem to have become immaculate in the past few days. He learns quickly.

”Not as yet, this one was an experiment. I only name the dishes that I wish to serve to someone I’m seeking to impress.” It doesn’t hurt to remind Will of his place in both subtle and overt ways. It is better that things are clear between them, master and slave, owner and owned. All of the relationships in Hannibal’s life have that quality and Hannibal prefers it that way. It is better for him to have authority in all things.

”I like it, thank you master,” says Will quietly, looking down at his plate and Hannibal feels almost guilty for the remark before shaking it off.

They eat in mostly silence, Hannibal occasionally remarking on some new dish he’d like to try and Will being appropriately attentive despite how tipsy he’s gotten. Hannibal can’t help but smile at the slightest indications that Will has drunk just enough. His eyes seem bigger, brighter, but not in the false way of before. Hannibal wants him and he can’t explain why he’s been denying himself all this time.

”I’ll have you, tonight, Will.” His slave looks up at him and nods, solemn and serious about something that feels to Hannibal the complete opposite. He wants Will in all ways but right now he’ll settle for his physical body. It doesn't even have to be a grand performance or even about breaking Will a little bit more. He doesn’t care about that right now, he wants to enjoy his slave and he wants to see him come. Hannibal hasn’t seen it yet, hasn’t enjoyed that kind of view and he wants to see it, wants to see Will’s face as he orgasms by Hannibal’s hands and mouth and cock.

He stands, abandoning his plate and despite being sober, he wants to let go of control and just *be* tonight. He moves around the table, taking Will’s hand in his and leading him through the house, leaving dirty plates and abandoned glasses as they pass through the kitchen.

Will follows in silence and Hannibal stops at the bottom of the stairs to push Will to move ahead of him. Will turns towards him as he passes and Hannibal reaches for the back of his head, grasping at his hair that’s not long enough to grip, not *yet*, in order to kiss him. Kissing slaves is somewhat taboo but people do what they want behind closed doors. Kissing is pleasurable and Hannibal doesn’t want to deny himself any earthly pleasures.

Is it alcohol or desire that has Will kissing him back with passion and zeal? Hannibal feels Will’s tongue press into his mouth and he presses back, refusing to allow Will to direct this, to dominate this. Hannibal presses against him and they almost lose their balance on the stairs but he pulls back long enough to push Will forwards, upwards, towards his bedroom.

They’re undressing each other as they move, Will pulling Hannibal’s tie free and Hannibal unbuttoning Will’s shirt and this doesn’t feel anything like the previous slaves. Will has wormed his way inside and it’s dangerous and Hannibal *doesn’t like it* while enjoying this far too much all the same.

He doesn’t care for implements or tools, doesn’t *need* anything extra between them now. He just needs desire to fuel this and he rubs his hard dick against Will’s body and feels the hardness of Will’s own cock pressing back against him.

They fall onto the bed and they’re turning and moving together, pressing against each other and rubbing, *moving*. Will feels warm and solid and yet Hannibal simply *knows* how easily broken the body under him could be. How easy to snap a neck, to slice and release the life out of Will.

Will would stay warm afterwards, for a while. He’s beautiful now, would he be more or less beautiful in death? And while Hannibal hasn’t ever had any problems with associating death

and dying with *sex*, when it comes to Will, the line seems uneven. It's crooked and blurred in places and he doesn't know where it ends.

While the thought of seeing how Will looks inside, of seeing flowing red blood pour from a sliced artery, Hannibal isn't done with Will yet and this is *his* room, *his* bed. This is not where he would do that, where he *will* do that.

Hannibal loses himself in kissing and rubbing until it starts to grow uncomfortable. Will's skin is so soft but the bones of his hips are sharp and he's still more angular than he should be. It will take more than a week of good food to fill him out.

Hannibal kisses across Will's cheek, feeling the beginning of stubble under his lips. He kisses along Will's jaw and down his neck and Will doesn't seem to be holding back any more. The sounds that come from Will's throat please Hannibal, make him suck the skin of his neck between his lips, sucking a bruise onto skin that is already bruised. He layers his marks, leaving another just above Will's collar. This marked and bruised collar is a more possessive way of marking what is his and Hannibal enjoys every moment. He moves methodically, nipping and licking in between. He presses back on the desire to bite down and feel the warm rush of blood, tempted as he is when Will lets out a pained gasp.

Hannibal strokes down Will's torso, alternating light explorations and hard scratches. Each elicits slightly different responses both vocally and physically. Hannibal is focused enough to observe, filing each new point of data away for later analysis.

He shifts down Will's body, sucking on one of Will's nipples, pressing it between his teeth and hearing and feeling Will's breath catch in his chest.

As abandoned as Will seems, his training is deep. He holds his arms flat on the bed, resisting the twitching motions where Hannibal is certain he has the urge to lift them. Perhaps he wants to push Hannibal away or, better yet, pull him closer. Hannibal bites at the flesh in his mouth and digs his fingers into the spaces between Will's ribs and listens to the sudden startled pained moan that Will tries to suppress.

Hannibal prods and squeezes, using his nails and his teeth and leaving Will's body covered in bruises and fresh red marks. He stops short of breaking the skin but he's pleased to note Will's ever present erection even as he bites against the soft flesh of Will's thigh. Will's hairlessness amuses him now. Will seems so much more sensitive and the smooth skin has a softness that Hannibal enjoys.

Hannibal thinks he would like to take Will's cock in his mouth but he's not going to. He doesn't want to give Will any ideas, not yet, and the most important thing for him now is to maintain his control. He moves aside instead, reaching for the lubricant he keeps by his bed.

It amuses him to see how depleted the bottle has already become as he squeezes some onto his fingers. He looks at Will. His slave seems thoughtful lying there, lax and quiet, and watching as Hannibal uses his other hand to lift Will's thigh up. He presses Will's leg against him, settling himself into the space and reaching blindly with fingers to find Will's hole.

Hannibal can't look away from Will's face as he slides his wet fingers along behind Will's balls and downwards. Will feels so *smooth* here now and Hannibal can't help but smile. Surprisingly, he earns a faint smile from Will in return and he looks into his slave's eyes and something about this feels so *wrong* in this moment.

Will bites his lip and Hannibal sees Will's hands twitch against the bed from the corner of his eye and perhaps Will wants to do something but doesn't have the confidence to act. Hannibal *likes* that his slaves hold no power and yet now he wants Will to have agency, to do whatever it is that he wants to do right now.

Hannibal slides his fingers inside and moves them in and out and watches Will's eyes narrow momentarily at the sudden intrusion. Hannibal watches how his adam's apple bobs as he swallows, watches the way the bruised and reddened skin of his neck moves, watches the way his chest rises and falls at an ever increasing rate.

Will's cock is hard against him, wet at the tip and Hannibal wants to know how Will tastes but he denies himself. He doesn't just want to know that particular taste after all and he doesn't want this to end just yet, not until he gets all the way inside Will's mind.

Hannibal pours more lube and even though he doesn't think he needs much more, he wants Will to come apart this time. This shouldn't just be Will fulfilling what he thinks is expected of him, this shouldn't just be Will giving up something that he's already lost. Hannibal wants something fresh and new and exciting from Will.

Hannibal lifts Will's thighs across his own, kneeling and positioning himself to get proper leverage. He leans over as he positions himself and slides the head of his dick along the space behind Will's balls. He might have used too much lube because it's slippery and *nice* but he can't quite get inside until he uses his fingers to find his goal.

He's looking into Will's eyes when he finally gets the head of his dick inside and presses his hips forward. He sinks slowly in, deeper and presses his hips up against Will's ass. He leans forward, over Will's chest, leaving Will's legs pressed wide on either side of him and they're so *close* together now and Hannibal thinks if he folded Will just a bit more he could reach down for a kiss. So he does.

Will kisses back and Hannibal finds a slow rhythm. Each stroke is slow, lazy and luxurious. He's in no rush to build up and have this over with so quickly. He wants to enjoy this feeling, the sensations and the closeness right now. Hannibal doesn't often enjoy this for himself, just to indulge like this but on some other level than the pure sexuality that usually happens with slaves.

Will quivers under him and he squeezes his eyes shut, breath catching. Hannibal looks down to see his hands fisted in the duvet, bunching the fabric between whitened knuckles. He smiles, a feeling of tenderness at the sight and he lowers his head, settling himself snug against Will's body, pressing his weight down on him as he continues to move his hips. "It's okay Will, you can come," he whispers and he hears Will release his breath. He releases more than that, letting go of whatever training or inhibition that has kept his hands by his sides. Hannibal feels Will's clawing fingers on his shoulders, against his biceps and Will's thighs

squeeze around him. Will makes the most wonderful noises then, breathy gasps and moans and he tries to lift his hips but Hannibal is far too heavy on top of him.

”Please,” he gasps and Hannibal shifts his hips, shallowly thrusting and turning his head to lick the side of Will’s face. Will’s skin tastes slightly salty from sweat and feels prickly and rough where his beard is growing in already.

Will is begging, making noises and half said words and even though Hannibal has given permission, his slave still *asks for it*. Hannibal presses so tightly against Will’s body that he can feel the slide of his stomach against Will’s hard cock. It can’t be comfortable, there’s too much friction here, contrasting entirely with the overly wet looseness of where they’re joined. Will feels relaxed and sloppy and wet and wonderful and Hannibal is just glad that he’s not being forced into coming sooner than he wants.

What he does want is for Will to come though, gasping and clenching around Hannibal’s dick. He wants Will to come from his body, from what Hannibal does to him and he finds himself speeding up a little, adjusting his angle until Will’s voice goes silent, nothing but heavy breaths coming from his open mouth. Hannibal squeezes his hand into Will’s thigh where it curls around his side and he leans his weight on his other forearm, pressing down, *in*.

When Will spills, it’s with a startling silence as his breath catches and he stops breathing momentarily. Hannibal feels the shudder and rolling clench around him as Will comes. It’s in that moment that Hannibal knows for certain that Will really has been a good boy. He can’t have been touching himself in this time, not with the way he comes now.

Hannibal is caught off guard by his own orgasm. He’d imagined himself fucking into a relaxed and oversensitive Will for some time yet. He’d pictured the discomfort on Will’s face as he did it. Something has tipped him over the edge and he presses forward, coming deep into Will’s bowels and hears himself grunting and it all sounds far too uncivilised to his own ears.

He sighs and falls forward, pressing down on Will and feeling the momentary squirm and Will’s attempts to breathe and not struggle. He doesn’t stay pressed down on him, though he wants to. He props himself up on his elbows and looks down at Will’s face.

Will looks up at him, calm and relaxed looking and his face is red and the bruises begin under his jaw and disappear down below where Hannibal can see and it all feels rather perfect.

They both grimace as Hannibal pulls free and the wet messiness of the act is all too apparent. Hannibal doesn’t like mess but it’s sometimes unavoidable. He slips off the bed and goes to the bathroom to shower.

The thought of sending Will away doesn’t have a chance to enter his mind because Will is suddenly *there* and Hannibal doesn’t object to him joining him in the shower. He stands and lets the water cascade down and he doesn’t move when Will starts to wash his shoulders and back, sliding wet hands and soap across his torso.

Will cleans off Hannibal’s dick quickly and efficiently and Hannibal turns to leave the shower, letting the water run. “Finish up by yourself,” he says sharply, loud enough to be

heard over the running water. Will looks grateful at the order and Hannibal has to wonder if he could feel ashamed of cleaning himself off after what they've just done, what Hannibal has just done to him.

The bedroom is so quiet and Hannibal pauses at the bed, looking at the wet spot on the duvet cover that marks where they just were. He folds back the duvet and climbs under the sheets, settling down with arms folded behind his head. There's something so luxurious about sliding into clean sheets on naked and freshly washed skin.

He lies in the dim light of the room, listening to the sound of running water, muffled through the bathroom door and he counts down time, waiting for the water to stop and for Will to reappear. He doesn't want to doze off, not yet, despite the growing post release relaxation that seems to flow through his veins.

He's startled from wandering thoughts by the sudden silence as the water stops. He turns his head to look to the bathroom door, the slice of light growing wider then blocked by the darkened figure of Will in the doorway. His slave turns off the bathroom light and pads quietly to the middle of the room, hesitating there. It's clear to Hannibal that he's torn. Does Will intend on leaving and going to his own room or climbing into bed next to his master as they've been doing for the past several nights? Hannibal wants to call out to him but he doesn't, he silently looks at Will and when Will looks at him, catching his eye, Will smiles.

Hannibal hides his own smile when Will turns away from the bedroom door and moves around the bed to get in. He hides his smile until he's curled around Will's body and he's free to bury the expression in the back of Will's neck, just above the collar marking him Hannibal's.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your kind support and feedback, it's encouraging as a writer to know your work is being enjoyed!

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

As always thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal feels as though they have some kind of understanding forming between them. It's not a true and full understanding, it's not the deep knowing that he craves, but it is the basis of something, enough to build on until Hannibal feels satisfied with what he's achieved with this one. Part of him, for fleeting moments, even thinks it might be nice to just leave things like this and stay as they are.

He returns to work and it's easier to give Will the run of the house than have him move to his own room in the morning to lock the door. The alternative of having Will sleep elsewhere doesn't appeal to him for some reason he can't explain.

Will sleeps so deeply and sweetly and sometimes Hannibal just enjoys holding him in the mornings. Hannibal has never been one to linger in his bed and yet he takes pleasure in the thought that Will wouldn't like to know that his master has seen him so vulnerable and open in his sleep.

Will doesn't scream, doesn't have nightmares the way he did that first night but he does make sounds, half said words and whole phrases said that don't make a lot of sense in their pieces. Perhaps Will sleeps better because he's found comfort in Hannibal's arms and Hannibal hopes that might be the case. A slave that feels comfortable is much easier to open up and far easier to seek out their secret places and parts.

Hannibal enjoys how relaxed things are between them while hating it all the same. He's not sure which Will he'd prefer. At least when Will was putting on an act, it was a display of what the slave *might* have been thinking. The version that Hannibal sees in him now might be more real but it's no less closed off and hidden to him. Hannibal wants the real thing, the meat and darkness inside and while Will *talks* now, it all feels like a far too unproductive therapy session.

Hannibal must return to work. Not just to keep up appearances but to ease the slowly building frustration and resentment he feels when he sees Will. Perhaps the distance will bring his slave closer to him, perhaps Will might get lonely in the house by himself.

Hannibal writes a list for Will, tasks that should be carried out before he returns home. He smiles as he adds one more before he leaves. It's better to give Will too much to do than too little, and perhaps setting his slave up to fail will generate a more *interesting* situation than he's enjoyed all week.

Returning to work is interesting, but not as much as Hannibal imagines tonight might go. It seems strange that after spending so much time with Will he'd already want to be around him so much but perhaps it's that he feels as though he hasn't even scratched the surface. He wants to know more about Will's kill, wants to know for sure if he enjoyed it as much as Hannibal believes he must have. How could the lowest of slaves not relish the power that taking human life brings?

Hannibal is pulled from his thoughts by his not interesting at all patient. He dislikes her greatly but her husband is involved with the Baltimore Opera and Hannibal does enjoy *knowing* people. He offers another platitude and she seems pleased with his response before prattling on about how bored she is at home and how her husband seems so dead against how many slaves she buys with *her* own money. Hannibal has perfected the art of not rolling his eyes at his patients, at least not while in their view.

He finds himself watching the clock during his last appointment but it's not such an unfamiliar action. He finishes up his notes and stares at his empty office and recalls the last time he'd been so eager to rush home.

Things are already different with Will but it's all so unstable and strange, despite surface appearances. He wonders if Will is as curious about what is happening, about what they're learning about one another. He smiles at the thought that Will could be learning much more than simply how he likes to be pleased sexually. Will seems bright, there's intelligence there that makes him worth Hannibal's time.

The drive home passes without Hannibal being consciously aware of it, his body driving him home without needing much input from his conscious mind. He spends the time thinking about what will greet him when he arrives. Has Will gotten through the tasks Hannibal had left?

The lights are on when he gets home, darkness starting to settle in and Hannibal unlocks the door and slips inside. The hallway light is on and it feels welcoming in a way Hannibal doesn't expect his domain to feel. He feels comfortable here because it's *his*, filled with fine things that bring him joy, things he can admire and that bring him feelings of luxury, class, purpose. Something about having a living creature in the house brings a warmth to it, an otherness to it but this is something more. Perhaps Will's power is stronger than Hannibal imagined.

The kitchen is empty but Hannibal hears Will moving, hears the noises as he works and Hannibal slips through to the side, to what was once a slave's quarters and now holds his laundry facilities.

Will is struggling with pulling wet sheets from the washing machine to get them into the dryer. He looks up when Hannibal comes in but he doesn't speak, just goes back to moving the heavy wet mass from one machine into the other.

"You didn't finish," says Hannibal and he thinks about a punishment that won't be intended to teach any lesson.

”Did you expect me to?” Will sounds tired, exasperated, and he slams the dryer shut with a bang. Hannibal raises his eyebrow, waiting for Will to realise his tone. He doesn’t or, if he does, perhaps he’s too prideful to add a belated ‘master’ to his address.

Hannibal should punish him but he felt glad to be home a moment ago. He enjoys inflicting pain, enjoys testing limits and reactions, and yet punishing Will feels as though it would be *work*. Hannibal turns and heads to the kitchen.

Cooking has a way of clearing his head, a ballet that is far more pleasurable now that he holds a package of fresh liver. He rolls his sleeves, neatly and meticulously, dons his apron, and gets to work.

He ignores Will, for the most part, even as Will finishes what he’s doing and comes to sit in the kitchen. The stool has become Will’s spot already, his designated viewing place as Hannibal cooks.

”How was your day at work, master?,” asks Will, voice quiet, subdued sounding and perhaps he’s feeling apologetic about his earlier tone or perhaps he’s simply hoping to avoid punishment. Hannibal can’t be sure of any of Will’s motives any more and he ignores him in favour of running his knife along his chef’s steel.

Perhaps he should be thinking about Will, thinking about punishing him or thinking merely about him. Perhaps he should be thinking of the big picture, his plans and hopes for his slave. Perhaps he should simply do whatever he feels like in the moment, even if it is impulsive and ends the game before it had the potential to get interesting.

He dredges the thinly sliced liver in flour, moving swiftly and enjoying every facet of creating the dish. He smiles as the liver sizzles in the pan. Better for this pig to create a beautiful meal, it was a particularly ugly pig, after all.

Will is silent, perhaps sensing that it would do him no good to speak now. Perhaps he knows, instinctively or otherwise that speaking now will at best be a mistake, only serving to make his master more upset with him now than he was before. Or then again, perhaps he's misjudged Will all this time and all that will happen is that his slave is far stupider than Hannibal had wanted to believe before. That would be a particular disappointment.

Hannibal plates the meal, two dishes and he looks at them and looks at Will. Will has been watching him closely and Hannibal catches his eye when he raises his head to look. Will doesn't look worried or hopeful or *anything*, he's blank again and while partly that infuriates Hannibal, it just reaffirms his growing obsession with this one. Better to have an interesting slave than a dull one, at least for the purposes Hannibal has in mind.

They move to the dining room, Will rushing forward to take out the silverware and lay the table as he should have done before. It's all actions worthy of punishment. He is a bad slave, he is poor at anticipating Hannibal's needs and that is all a slave like Will tends to be purchased for. If he can't keep his master happy, how does he intend to remain useful and relevant?

They eat in relative silence and while the vindictive petty and impulsive Hannibal desires to deny Will his dinner, particularly when he sees the way Will stares at the plates, he also knows that he desires a slightly more filled out Will. Sex with him is about pure physical pleasure and Hannibal doesn't want to deny himself that. He wants his sexual conquests to be visually and aesthetically pleasing also.

"We will need to address your failure, Will," says Hannibal, sipping his wine and pushing his empty plate forward and Will pauses, fork nearing mouth and glances up at him. His slave nods then, doesn't speak but nods, and he moves the fork the rest of the way to his mouth and chews on the last bite of liver.

Will swallows then, placing knife and fork down and moving his hands to his lap. He looks down at his plate, shoulders hunched and for a moment, Hannibal worries that he's going to fall back into the role of a broken pathetic little thing, eager to please and boring because of it. "You knew I wouldn't, couldn't, do it all, master," says Will quietly. He looks up and there's that fire of defiance in his eyes at odds with the rest of his body language.

"Why do you think I gave you so many tasks?" asks Hannibal, unsure if Will is going to answer truthfully but hopeful nonetheless.

"It's a test," says Will and his mouth twitches at the corner, almost a smile but caught just in time.

"What result do you think I wanted?"

Will shakes his head, sitting up a little straighter and looking Hannibal in the eye, tilting his head as though considering him. "I don't suppose you would have an intended result; a good experiment is surely one you don't know the result of, or at least a more interesting experiment?"

Hannibal doesn't try to hide his smile. Perhaps he should encourage Will in his boldness, it's far more interesting to him. "Perhaps, or perhaps not. Perhaps I wanted to set you up to fail."

"So you *are* a sadist," says Will. He doesn't look worried or upset at the thought, but he does narrow his eyes slightly, as though thinking it over. "How will you punish me this time?"

"You're so certain that I will punish you? Perhaps I'm a benevolent master." Hannibal represses the urge to laugh at the thought as the words leave his own mouth. He is no kind master and if Will thinks his punishments thus far was *sadistic* then he will be quite unpleasantly surprised with what's to come. Will shakes his head and closes his eyes in a movement that is far slower than any blink. He frowns and opens them, looking at Hannibal and he sticks his chin forward, jaw jutting in a pose that strikes Hannibal as *rebellious*, even *rude*.

Hannibal laughs then; he doesn't suppress it, doesn't attempt to. "My, you are a fierce little creature." He's said too much now and he knows it's impulsive because he notes how Will shifts, attitude changing and pose adjusting in a multitude of subtle ways.

"So we find out what you really want Master."

"Is that what this act is?" asks Hannibal but he already knew all along, eager little Will, pretending to be whatever his master wants, whatever will keep him alive another day. "You mistake what I want with what you should be"

"I am your slave, master," says Will, voice sounding sweet as honey and he tilts his chin towards his chest, looking up at Hannibal with big innocent eyes. "I just want to please you."

Like that the moment is gone and right when Hannibal felt on the edge of discovering something real, something concrete, his wily little slave is once more hidden. Hannibal has to wonder if any of the glimpses he's gotten of Will in all this time have been *real*. He's second guessing everything he'd thought he'd found so far. Who is even to know at this stage and he sighs, standing and picking up his plate.

He leaves the dining room and Will sitting there and heads to the kitchen already deciding that it is about time he has a night without Will next to him. Perhaps he has been growing too used to the presence of a warm body in his bed. It's best if he has a break from this game, at least for the night.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your support and feedback <3

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Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

A huge thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal doesn't want to deny himself anything, not ever. He denies himself things all the time though, small things. He resists the urge to kill pigs on a nearly daily basis, he resists saying things that would draw too much of the wrong sort of attention, he makes tactical decisions driven by strategy rather than *want*. It's all why he made the decision to step back from Will, at least long enough for things to settle between them, for him to get some perspective on things.

Will does the housework during the day now that Hannibal no longer locks him in his room. It's not quite to Hannibal's standards, to the standards of the cleaning service he usually calls but then again, he'll learn. It's a little funny to Hannibal the thought that while he may eventually learn, by the time that happens, their little dance will most likely have reached it's conclusion. Perhaps it will even happen long before then.

Hannibal continues to cook fine meals and he ensures that he keeps himself well stocked with his favourite ingredients. Watching Will happily eat a dish he's prepared pleases him, so there's no desire to banish Will from his dining room, at least for the time being. Watching Will eat is a pleasure, even if his conversation over dinner serves to frustrate more often than it pleases him. Will does sometimes seem to open up more but in other moments he's as mysterious as ever. He makes comments and says things that sound as though they come from a hundred different people. Will would make either a very interesting patient or a particularly irritating one, if he could afford Hannibal's services.

It's not that Hannibal does particularly dislike Will's act. He does but on some level it's intriguing. He hasn't been this intrigued with one of his slaves for a long time and already Will has lasted a full week longer than two of them. Perhaps he'll make it to four months and surpass the current record. Hannibal would find *that* impressive alright. He sips wine and pours Will a glass but he seems to have been monitoring his intake because Hannibal hasn't had the pleasure of seeing him properly drunk again. He wonders what combination of drugs would be fun to see affecting Will, but then that version would be just another act wouldn't it?

"Tell me Will, about your first master?" Hannibal asks, and it's not dissimilar to other questions he's asked but Hannibal desires so much rich context for Will, to understand him. Will puts down his knife and fork and runs his fingers along the stem of his wine glass before looking up at Hannibal.

"Are you sure you wish to hear about another using me?" asks Will, voice soft and Hannibal thinks he can see shades of both the shy submissive and obedient slave and the truth coming out. He nods and smiles slightly as Will nods right back. "I was kept for sexual purposes, I was young and I am told rather attractive."

He sounds self depreciating in his tone and Hannibal would like to tell him that he must have been, still *is* attractive, to Hannibal, to anyone with eyes, but he doesn't speak and continues to listen. Will shrugs. "I don't know what there is to tell, he had a fairly big household, kept me for a few years until he got bored. I lasted longer than many of his others before me, I heard he didn't like them once they got too old looking." Hannibal nods again, thoughtfully this time as he considers Will's boyish looks. They're the looks that have kept him alive and in that particular line of service for so long.

"Did you like it? When he used you?" Hannibal isn't sure if he should expect an honest answer but he tries just the same.

"You don't know what he liked to do to me, master."

"So tell me." Hannibal holds his breath, waiting for either a sly come on or a bit of honesty. He hopes for the latter while knowing, with a thrill of excitement, that he could get either right now.

"He was vanilla, master, at first."

"At first?" Hannibal feels as though he is in an appointment, prompting for further information but Will doesn't seem as though he's playing, not quite right now at least.

"He just liked using my mouth, my ass, but he wasn't rough, he was actually very gentle with me, at first."

Hannibal nods and tents his fingers under his chin. He leans forward over his empty plate and looks at Will, telling him with his face rather than his voice that he wants more information. Will looks back at him and purses his lips for a moment, thinking of what to say perhaps.

"He got bored, after the first few years, they all do, eventually." He sighs and lifts his napkin, wiping absently at his mouth even though there's nothing there to wipe away. He folds his hands on his lap and looks at his plate. "He started punishing me for things I didn't do, setting me up to displease him." He looks up at Hannibal, tilting his head slightly. "I've found since that it's a game all masters like to play, eventually."

"You think I'm playing," asks Hannibal and for a moment he feels offended. This might be a game to him but it's no mere triviality that Will's other masters have played. Hannibal's games are more than whatever these other fools have done in the pursuit of sexual pleasure, Hannibal desires more than that, is *smarter* than that, is *better* than that. Will smiles faintly and blinks slowly at him.

"Are you? It certainly seems like it."

"So you think we're playing a game, but only one of us seems to be *playing*," Hannibal says, frustrated and while the words leave his mouth he knows that on some level, Will is *right*. They're both just *playing*, and Hannibal wants to *win*.

"I don't want to play a game master, unless that's what you *want* of me," says Will softly, sounding coy and sweet. He brings his shoulders up and flutters his eyelashes and it's all a sick perverse impersonation of what Will's first master no doubt wanted. "Everyone wants something," he whispers and the words don't match with the act he's started and Hannibal frowns.

"He was playing a game with you, one with no way to win."

"It's not that kind of game, there's only ever one winner," says Will, continuing to pout and flutter his eyelashes and Hannibal lifts the napkin from his lap to throw it onto the table next to his plate.

"I don't like this game, Will," Hannibal mutters, in both resignation and frustration. He doesn't want to dispose of Will, not yet but then, he's starting to question if he'll ever get to see anything real.

"So don't play with me."

Hannibal looks at Will and sees him sit up straight, chin out and the last vestige of the shy little thing melting away. He looks angry, *fierce* and Hannibal finds the whole picture so appealing, so attractive.

"I want you to stop pretending to be what you think I want," says Hannibal and it feels oh so wrong to be this honest with a slave, to say what he really feels and yet he can't seem to stop now that he's started. "I want to understand you, to see the real you. I bought you because the thought of you taking a human life fascinates me."

"You're sick," says Will quietly. It's the kind of thing that should rightly get a slave beaten, even killed. Hannibal smiles at him.

"And you are a fascinating little enigma. I could only have ever hoped you would be so interesting when I purchased you."

"You're used to being so far ahead of others I'd wager," says Will thoughtfully. He sits back in his chair, slouching slightly and he looks at Hannibal, studying him. "How boring for you."

Hannibal laughs then and any worry he'd had moments ago about ruining the rules of his little plan are gone. This is far more intriguing. "Can you keep up?"

"Try me," says Will and he raises his eyebrows in what might be a challenge.

"You want to play at being my equal?" asks Hannibal and the question is ludicrous and yet, while Hannibal *knows*, fundamentally *knows* that he has no equal, he'd enjoy watching Will try it.

”No game,” says Will and he smiles, creasing his eyes in a show of genuine mirth.

Hannibal nods and stands, taking his empty plate in hand to clear it. “So in a show of… *equality*,” says Hannibal, the tone sounding offhand in a constructed and artificial way. “Do *you* wish to join me in my bed tonight?”

Will laughs softly and picks up his wineglass, draining the last. “I can’t believe you’d fall for it quite that quickly,” he says, putting down the glass.

”Of course not,” says Hannibal, heading to the kitchen and hiding his own annoyed frown. “You’re still my property,” he calls over his shoulder.

Will doesn’t answer but he does follow Hannibal, dishes in hand. Hannibal puts his empty plate in the sink and as much as he hates leaving a mess, he trusts Will to at least clean this mess while he’s at work tomorrow. If not, there will be consequences, after all.

He’s not tired and while there are other ways to pass time before bed, *pleasurable* ways, he heads instead to his library.

Will follows silently and he sits down boldly in one of the wingback chairs next to the empty fireplace as Hannibal turns on two lamps. The room is decorated in a classical style, a *cliche* as one particularly rude guest had called it. That particular pig had ended up as a tray of h'ordeuvres at one of Hannibal’s evening soirees.

He pours a glass of brandy and hesitates a moment before pouring a second and bringing the glass to Will. Will takes it silently, holding it without bringing it close to his face as Hannibal sits down facing him.

The room is cold, dimly lit by the lamps rather than the overhead lights and it’s quiet, cosy despite the chill. Hannibal has always liked this room and he sits quietly, bringing the glass to his nose to inhale the scent of the brandy. He considers Will and they look at one another, both thinking, regarding the other. Hannibal wonders if Will is as curious as he himself is about what is going on in the other man’s mind.

”You never really answered,” says Hannibal. Will looks slightly startled from whatever it was he was thinking. He shakes his head and finally brings the glass to his mouth, swallowing a mouthful without truly savouring it. Such fine brandy seems like a waste on him.

”Do you wish to come to my bed tonight?”

Will shrugs and looks at the remaining brandy in his glass. “Is that a genuine question?”

”I thought we would refrain from playing, for now at least.” Hannibal brings his glass to his mouth and allows himself a sip, the flavour running across his tongue and down his throat followed by the burn of alcohol. Will leans forward in his chair and something about this position echoes so many memories of not just Will but other slaves. Sitting face to face like this, it almost seems a joke, an implication of them sharing some commonality of status together when such a thing is so impossible.

Will doesn't respond and they sit in quiet contemplation for long enough that Hannibal needs to get up to refill his glass. Will is behind him, still a mouthful of brandy more in his glass and Hannibal looks pointedly at the glass in Will's hand as he drinks from his own.

"Sex is enjoyable," says Hannibal and Will doesn't attempt to hide the motion of rolling his eyes. Hannibal smiles. "Did you enjoy it with your other masters?"

"Sometimes," says Will quietly. He swirls the brandy glass in a way that says it's the motion of someone who witnessed someone else doing it rather than of a connoisseur.

"Have you enjoyed it with *me*?"

"Sometimes," says Will again, a note of amusement in his voice. He smiles mischievously. "Did *you*?"

Hannibal nods. "I don't like to do anything I don't enjoy," says Hannibal, watching as Will shrugs.

"Depends, sometimes things work out differently than you might imagine. Sometimes you start liking things that you didn't at first."

"Oh do tell," says Hannibal smiling and he feels warm and happy and open. He leans back in his chair and drains the end of his second glass of brandy. Coupled with the wine from dinner, he feels very *relaxed* and he imagines Will must know it by now.

Will makes an amused sound in his chest that's just short of a bark of laughter. He licks his lips and sighs. "Now now master, that might just give you *ideas*."

"You think I need ideas from your other masters? Tell me Will, what was the worst thing that a master has ever asked you to do?"

"*Made* me do," Will corrects. "And I don't think you really want to hear those stories. You'd prefer something titillating like the one who preferred I act like a girl or the one who preferred a puppy."

"The ones who had you play a role for them?"

Will shrugs. "Yes...isn't that what all this is, in the end?"

"You think I just want a fantasy?" Hannibal considers the answer to his own question as he asks it. "Perhaps it's a fantasy that only works when it's real."

Will shrugs. "They could have bought a girl, or engaged in actual beastiality, or found a slave that actually *was* that way, whatever they *really* wanted." He shrugs. "You're the psychiatrist."

Hannibal smiles again and he can't remember being amused this often with any of the others. "You seem to be plenty insightful, Will."

Will looks up and drinks from his glass, watching Hannibal over the rim as he finishes off the brandy. He swallows and looks away. “Is that what it is,” he asks absently. Even with the alcohol warming him and clouding his mind, Hannibal can hear something else in Will’s voice.

”So,” Hannibal says, standing and moving to put his glass down. His back to Will, he looks up at the wall and squares his shoulders. “I give you your choice Will, my room or yours.”

Hannibal leaves, moving through the house and up the stairs without thought to whether Will is following or not. He doesn’t want to think about it, to place a meaning on any of the choices Will might make, at least not until afterwards.

He undresses and it’s while hanging his suit that he hears Will’s footsteps stopping outside his door. He continues on, moving into the bathroom and the running water as he brushes his teeth blocks out any noises in the bedroom that might be happening. It’s better to think of it when it happens than worry about what might not occur.

Perhaps he should feel something when he emerges from the bathroom and sees Will. Perhaps he should be pleased and feel as though Will must truly have come for his own reasons, that he *wants* to lie in Hannibal's bed tonight. The willingness of a partner hasn't been a high priority of Hannibal's at any stage but he still likes the idea of *Will* choosing him.

He doesn't speak, doesn't comment on Will's body as he strips himself naked. He doesn't frown at the way Will discards his clothes to hang over the armchair near the window. Doesn't despair about the state of Will's fine new shirt, wrinkled and tossed on top of the pile. He doesn't say anything as he slides into his bed and watches Will finish undressing and come closer.

Will slides into the bed next to him and Hannibal reaches, turning out the lights. He slides across the dark and cool expanse of sheets and bedding between them, bumping against Will's warm body in the darkness and finding how pleasant it is to touch when he can like this. He could touch Will any time he wants and yet it's the first time tonight, now, that he finds the true object of his interest in his arms. He pulls Will against him and slides his lips against Will's bare shoulder and sniffs at his neck.

Will's body doesn't feel tense in his arms but it's almost too loose, too still as he moves along with Hannibal's own motions. He can hear their breathing but no words are exchanged and Hannibal doesn't mind. The time for talk is over now and he smiles as he slides his fingers along Will's stomach and feels the muscles under skin twitching at the feather light touch. He presses close and he feels Will wince as Hannibal pinches skin on his neck between his teeth. It's a belated thought to Hannibal that Will is still bruised and sore and he smiles in the darkness. He can't see and while his eyes will grow accustomed to the dark, he doesn't mind being without his vision for the moment. He closes his eyes and enjoys the scent and touch and taste and even the sounds of Will's breathing. His senses honed to enjoying the slave in his bed, he can do without sight.

Hannibal lowers his fingers further and brushes across the base of Will's dick and feels the soft skin there, still mostly free from regrowth. Will feels so soft and smooth and touchable and Hannibal enjoys touching. He wants Will to touch him back, to take this pleasure himself

but Will doesn't move and it's no good for Hannibal to ask or force him into it. The joy of the thing is in Will's desire.

Hannibal wraps his fingers around Will's flaccid dick, trying to coax it into a reaction, a movement so that he can start to stroke it. He just needs it firm enough to stroke and find a rhythm and yet it barely seems to react to his touches. He pauses and listens to Will's breathing and he knows he's not asleep but he doesn't seem to be interested in what's happening either. Without warning, Hannibal squeezes and he feels the way Will's entire body jerks and startles at the sudden movement, pain perhaps but not intense enough to provoke Will entirely.

Hannibal lets go, moving down to cup Will's balls. A gentler squeeze here to serve as a warning before he runs his fingertips along the flesh here, down and around, exploring all of Will's hairless parts. Hannibal smiles against Will's neck and kisses the skin here now, gentle, affectionate even. He smells Will again and in such a short time he's become so fond of Will's scent. He wants Will but he's tired and he's not so turned on that he needs to climax himself. The movements and touching become more about Will, about teasing him and passing his own time until he feels quite ready to relax and sleep. He moves close as he can against Will, crowding tight and lining the lengths of their bodies together, touching everywhere.

Will wiggles slightly but it's not the press of hips that he's used to entice before, it's a slight movement as though he's trying to find a comfortable position. Hannibal feels the sheet move as Will lifts his arm and he feels Will's hand across the back of his own, pausing the movement as he runs his fingertips along the seam of Will's thigh. "Are you not tired?" Will's voice is the faintest of whispers, so low that Hannibal can barely hear him but he does, he listens intently as Will breathes out, almost a sigh.

"Not yet," he answers, his voice soft but sounding infinitely louder than Will's. "I'll sleep after you come for me."

Will's hand drops away from his and Hannibal reads it as acceptance or perhaps even permission. He slides his arm underneath Will's body, pulling him up on top of him and Will's muscles jerk and move at the sudden change in position. It's awkward and Will's head falls back onto the pillow next to Hannibal's . Hannibal can feel will's buttocks pressing against his crotch and even his tired state can't prevent the stirring of his own cock at the feeling of the weight of his slave on his body. Will doesn't move, he's limp and still as Hannibal arranges them, sliding his own thighs further apart to lay Will's legs between his own.

With Will sitting upright, this would be a nice position for Will to ride him, to pleasure him but it's not about that right now. Hannibal slides his hands along Will's torso, zeroing in on erogenous zones that he knows will be reliable.

It's not about teasing, not now, and Hannibal rubs and strokes at Will's dick, trying to grow the slight firmness into a full erection. He cups Will's balls with his other hand, rolling the flesh and it's not quite there yet but he can hear how Will's breath speeds up. He wants to ask what's wrong, ask Will why he doesn't seem to be into this but he doesn't. He squeezes at Will's balls and pinches the skin of Will's thigh in sudden annoyance and Will gasps. The sound is pleasant and Hannibal pinches again. The sound is less impressive this time around and Hannibal moves on to another patch of flesh.

His right hand doesn't leave Will's cock, stroking and manipulating as it grows harder in the tiniest of increments. Will responds to the scrape of Hannibal's nails on his stomach, to the sudden pinch of a nipple, the lick and nip of Hannibal's teeth against his bruised neck. It's slow and infuriating and Will feels heavy on Hannibal's chest and their position is far from *comfortable* but finally Hannibal holds Will's erection in his hand.

Hannibal hadn't been in the mood to have sex when they started and yet now he finds his own erection pressing hard between Will's buttocks. He wants Will but at the same time he doesn't want to move, doesn't want to reach to find the lubricant. He doesn't want the heavy solidness of Will's body to not be pressing down on top of him any more, he doesn't want to stop the feeling of being surrounded by the smell of Will. He sighs and bucks his hips slightly and rubs at Will's dick and loses the train of any thought he'd had prior to this.

Hannibal is wrapped in the moment and it's not enough but it will have to do. Will's body feels tense above him as he grows close and Hannibal renews the speed and intensity of his movements, using his hands across Will's torso to bring him close. He rubs his dick against Will's buttocks but the drag and press and weight of Will is too heavy and not broad enough to bring him any friction or satisfaction.

Will is quiet when he comes, sudden and tense and shuddering. Hannibal feels the pulse in his hand and he feels how Will’s body goes slack on top of him and how Hannibal would love to press his dick inside Will’s ass and fuck him while he’s so calm and worn out and sensitive like this. He rolls them, freeing himself from Will’s weight and he doesn’t pause to wash them off or clean his hands. He doesn’t worry about getting Will’s come on the sheets. He curls up behind him and spoons against his back, tucking his own neglected erection into the space against Will’s ass and relaxes as his mind searches for sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for your kudos and comments <3

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

As always thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will may be no less happy to be doing housework when Hannibal returns home but he has done it and greets Hannibal with what seems like a genuine smile. Hannibal might prefer to be greeted by a kiss, especially after how things feel different between them but he doesn't want to press and push on bruised places too much, not this time.

It's become a routine now, one that Hannibal is quite aware he will be growing bored with in short order. He needs something, an outing or new company. He wants to be surrounded by beautiful things, he wants more than Will.

Will has been entertaining of late, especially their conversations, finally opening up increment by increment and Hannibal wants to spend as much time with him as possible. He wants more though, needs more, and already he thinks of his next outing or dinner party, wonders what new entertainment he can conjure for himself.

Things are already starting to feel stale for him as he ties his apron and Will takes his spot on the stool in the kitchen and he pauses, looking up at Will's expectant face. He beckons. "Come here, I want you to help."

Hannibal doesn't like others getting involved in his cooking, not unless it's for one of his parties and he has no choice based solely on the scope of it. He doesn't like having others underfoot, *interfering* in his art. He slides the knife from the block and lays it down on the chopping board. Will stands next to him hesitant and Hannibal smiles. "Can you chop an onion?"

Will shakes his head and Hannibal sighs. Slaves like Will are placed into a very specific niche. "They only taught me to chop up pigs at the plant," says Will and Hannibal realises he's attempting to make a joke, to lighten the odd mood. Hannibal smiles at him and nods to the board.

"I'll show you, it's easy."

It's easy but Will does not do the job to anywhere near Hannibal's standards. He *tried*, and while he slides Will's attempt into the bin and pulls out another onion to demonstrate, he feels a little sorry for Will.

He chops it quickly, swift and perfect and he looks up at Will to see his eyes watering and knows it will take a lot of onions before Will's become accustomed to *this*.

Hannibal hands another onion to Will as he begins to prepare the rest of the ingredients. He removes the sweetbreads from the refrigerator, drying them off and beginning to trim them. He dredges them in flour and for a moment is sad that they came from a rather mundane calf and purchased from a butcher this time.

He cooks, sauteeing the sweetbreads before moving them to the oven. He smiles at Will's job of chopping the onion and it's still not to Hannibal's standard but he's feeling magnanimous today, so he slides Will's onion into the pan with the mushrooms and starts to cook them. He moves swiftly and when he glances back, he sees Will watching and studying each move he makes. Hannibal smiles.

Hannibal finishes his dish, creating a sauce with stock and white wine and he pauses for a moment to savour the smell in the kitchen. He looks up to find Will gone and he picks up the plates, moving to the dining room.

Will has laid out the table and even two wine glasses. He stands behind his usual chair and smiles shyly. "I didn't know what wine you'd like."

Hannibal normally drinks while he cooks but not today. He places the plates down and returns to the kitchen, quickly pulling a bottle of a favourite and reliable rose.

They eat and Will's eyes slide shut in ecstasy at the first bite. Hannibal smiles, pleased that Will can appreciate the buttery creamy taste. Hannibal pours them each a glass of wine and raises his own briefly to Will before taking a sip. Will looks down at his plate and Hannibal feels that pang again. Not quite boredom but the beginning of it perhaps.

"I think I shall be throwing a small gathering next week," says Hannibal thoughtfully. Will's head snaps up far too quickly but he manages to play it off with a casual nod.

"Yes master," he says softly. Hannibal frowns.

"This is not an excuse for you to fall backwards Will. Yes, you will need to behave as expected in front of any guests but I…." Hannibal pauses, sighing as he tries to express what he feels without giving away too much of himself. "I hope you know it's for their benefit, not mine."

Will nods and returns to his meal, his reactions to the dish seeming more muted and controlled now. Hannibal purses his lips as he studies him. "Tell me Will, something worries you about this gathering of mine."

"Depends what kind of party it is," says Will, sounding sullen. He puts another bite of food in his mouth, chewing while looking down at his plate. Hannibal raises his eyebrows but Will doesn't look up to see.

"What kind of parties were you brought to attend before?"

Will looks up then, eyes narrowing as he looks at Hannibal. "The kind of parties slaves that look like me...or at least how I used to look, are bought to be shown off at."

It's the wrong thing to say but Hannibal can't resist saying the words. "You are still very much attractive Will, if I hadn't seen your records I would have guessed you far younger."

Will winces at the words, the compliment not taken as Hannibal wanted him to take it. He frowns for a moment, and then just like that the expression is gone and his face is blank. "Do you like to share your toys?" There's no emotion in his voice when he asks and how many times has he wondered this before? Hannibal shakes his head.

"No, Will."

He doesn't explain how possessive he is, doesn't point out that no one is worthy to use Hannibal's possessions but himself. He doesn't need to say it, to expand on the point for Will's benefit.

"This meal is delicious," says Will, the robotic tone not quite leaving his voice as he returns to dinner conversation. It feels forced but Hannibal appreciates Will being the one to force it for once.

"You're not put off meat after working in a slaughterhouse?" Hannibal takes a bite and chews, swallowing with a relish. "I once knew a perfectly pleasant carnivore who became an insufferable vegetarian after seeing a chicken being slaughtered."

Will snorts and tries to hide his amusement which just serves to broaden the smile on Hannibal's face. Will puts down his knife again, trying to remove the smirk from his face as he looks up at Hannibal.

"It's hard to be picky when the food tastes this good." Hannibal beams at Will's words and perhaps it's just a bit of ego stroking but he watches Will pick up his knife and fork to cut another piece. Will chews it slowly, closing his eyes to savour it and Hannibal can't help but enjoy simply *watching*, even if it is an act.

"Thank you, Will." He means it, even if it feels odd to be thanking a slave.

Will's plate is cleared in short order and Hannibal watches his slave study him as he finishes his own meal. Others might find it disconcerting but Hannibal finds he enjoys being the centre of Will's attention like this. An owner should be the centre of their slave's world, after all.

"Have you ever had to kill your food?" asks Will and the question makes Hannibal want to laugh. He hides the urge and simply nods instead. Will narrows his eyes at his response, tilting his head in a way that tells Hannibal he's mulling over the information. "I think I've lost count of how many pigs I killed. They put the new ones on the worst jobs and slicing their throats is considered one of the bad ones."

"Is that so," says Hannibal quietly. He picks up his glass to take a sip, afraid to say too much and interrupt Will's interesting revelation about his time at Verger meats.

"I mean, I always thought gutting them was worse, that's difficult and *messy*. Cutting their throats is easy." He looks at Hannibal and shrugs, a small smile on his face. "They're just

pigs after all." His smile twitches slightly, the corners of his mouth dropping as his face grows sober. It's as though he realises how the comment sounds. Perhaps he thinks he sounds monstrous, as though Hannibal might think his attitude a bad thing.

The thought of Will feeling so blasé about the whole thing both intrigues and annoys Hannibal. He wants Will to be affected by it so that when he finally starts opening up about the *human* life he took, he'll at least have something interesting to say. For him to not care at all might be interesting too, in a different way but one that takes him too close to Hannibal's core for comfort.

Hannibal drains the rest of his wine and puts down the glass. "There's something very beautiful about killing your own meat," says Hannibal and he doesn't mean for it to have another meaning but the way Will smiles at him makes him feel as though perhaps Will knows *exactly* what he means after all.

"Funny enough, they weren't serving us fresh pork at the factory," says Will, picking up his own glass. He drains the rest of it and Hannibal reaches for the bottle, finding it empty.

"I enjoy cooking for others, you may as well join me for dinners," Hannibal remarks, standing and heading towards the kitchen.

It's part of their routine again, clearing after dinner and Hannibal considers changing it, throwing Will off entirely. He hasn't killed in quite some time and he's missing it already. He wants to bring Will along and throw him off and see how he'll react but at the same time, that will all come at its own pace. There's a set plan of events happening and they need to run in order, need to happen precisely as they should.

"Are you alright master?" Will's voice sounds so quiet and it sounds so *wrong*, for him to be the one inquiring on Hannibal. It snaps Hannibal from his line of thought, lost in it as he was, and he turns to see Will standing next to him, looking up at him.

Will's face looks open, sweet and nice, and he's opening up to Hannibal, all of their conversations and interactions of the last few days and yet in that moment, Hannibal senses the lie.

"You're still playing along, aren't you?" Perhaps he shouldn't have asked, shouldn't have given away his position but he catches enough of a flicker on Will's face to reveal the truth. He smiles even though there's nothing to smile about and Will smiles back and as much as he might be missing certain other activities, he knows he has plenty to keep him occupied right now.

They go upstairs and Will follows Hannibal to his room without being asked. He stands and he doesn't say anything when Hannibal opens the box at the bottom of the bed and starts removing items one by one. He lines them up neatly in straight rows and he listens to the faint sounds of Will's presence behind him.

"We're going to play," he says, smiling as he picks up a length of rope. He turns and Will cocks his head to the side, eyebrows raised. Hannibal smiles and shows his teeth and it's easy for it to turn into a snarl because it's simply a reflection of what he's really feeling in this

moment. He stands in a fluid motion, stalking across the room to his stationary slave. He leans in close, sniffing at the slight tinge of fear around him and he smiles.

”Be a good boy and strip off your clothes,” he whispers, winding the rope around his elbow and hand, marking out lengths. It’s smooth nylon rope that is easy to tie and feels smooth but will be harsh on Will’s skin when Hannibal pulls it tight. “Don’t think you’ve figured out what I want,” he whispers and he shouldn’t be so open with his feelings, he should save something, hold something back from Will but he *doesn’t want to*.

He watches as Will reveals his body piece by piece and he marvels at the scattered bruises across him, marks that Hannibal has left to show the world that *he was here*. He enjoys the way the bruises concentrate in certain areas, marking the history of their past few encounters, revealing to anyone that looks how much Hannibal enjoys Will’s neck.

He moves to stand behind Will and he feels pride and annoyance in equal measure that Will doesn’t turn to see what he’s doing. Will doesn’t resist when Hannibal takes and ties one wrist and then the other. He moves slowly, tying neat meticulous knots as he draws Will’s forearms together, forcing his shoulders back and his back to arch. It can’t be comfortable but it is precisely the kind of stress position Hannibal has always enjoyed.

He tucks the ends of his rope neatly, perfectly and he presses two fingers against Will’s neck, finding his carotid and checking how quickly Will’s pulse beats in his neck. It’s faster but not fast enough, not for Hannibal’s liking and he moves in front of Will and tilts his chin up.

Will looks back at him, face held purposefully neutral but eyes bright and Hannibal is glad that he hasn’t attempted to drift off, not yet. There’s nowhere for him to escape off to and he smiles at the sight before him one more time before turning his back on Will.

He goes to the line of items, running his fingers along next to them where they lie on the bed. He picks up a ball gag and holds it in his hand, turning to look at Will with raised eyebrows. He is irritated but not surprised when Will fails to show any reaction to the gag. Hannibal drops it back down, picking up one of the smaller butt plugs instead. “I think I’d prefer to hear you,” he says absently, looking up at Will.

Will’s chest is forced forward by the position of his arms, he stands straight up and he’s so open, *there* for Hannibal’s purposes. He’s too available, too nice and perfect and ready. He’s too perfect for Hannibal to want to do anything other than destroy him.

Hannibal steps close, crowding in, but Will doesn’t budge from his position. Hannibal is slapping his face before he’s registered the urge to do it. The sound seems far too loud and he feels the sting in his hand, sees Will’s head rock to the side.

He can’t explain the urge to do it, just that he wouldn’t have resisted it even if he’d had the opportunity to examine the desire. Will straightens, head coming up and Hannibal can see the red flush of Will’s cheek where his hand had met it.

”You’re not going to say anything?” Hannibal feels disappointed and he doesn’t expect Will to be vocal. He expects him to withdraw, if anything. Perhaps it *was* impulsive.

”What should I say?” asks Will, his voice sounding tiny and quiet, like it’s coming from somewhere deep inside, as though it has to struggle to escape his mouth. Hannibal can’t help but smirk at the words. It’s not on either end of what he was expecting but perhaps it’s somewhere in the middle.

”Argue perhaps, tell me you don’t want it or beg me.” He smiles then, particularly when he sees Will’s eyebrows raise a fraction. “Are you going to beg me Will?”

”No,” Will whispers but he’s smiling now and Hannibal is somewhat thrown by having *that* particular move pulled on him. He shakes his head as he reaches his hands up, cupping Will’s face between his palms. He rubs along Will’s cheek with his thumb, slightly warm and still pinker than the other.

”If you’re trying to please me, you should know that wasn’t the answer I wanted to hear.”

Will’s smile broadens, or perhaps it’s just a trick in Hannibal’s mind because it really doesn’t seem like he’s moved at all. “I thought you wanted to be my friend, rather than my owner.” Will’s voice sounds mocking and Hannibal feels so *angry* at that tone. It’s a mistake, for Will to make him feel this way, to rile him up and feed his anger like this. He can’t be blamed for the way his fingers tighten on Will’s face, squeezing his jaw.

Will is quiet, eyes staring and it takes far more self control than Hannibal would admit to get his fingers to loosen and his grip to release. He drops his hands to his sides and he studies Will’s face, still smiling and eyes still bright and cheeks both red now where Hannibal’s fingers have left faint red blotches.

Hannibal wants to hurt him now, wants to make him *feel* how enraged he’s made him in the entire time he’s owned Will. He needs Will to feel the frustration Hannibal feels, needs him to understand. If Will doesn’t understand then Hannibal will *make* him understand through mortification of his flesh and Hannibal will be the one to make him *repent*.

He turns Will in one motion, spinning his body and marching him in front of him towards the bathroom. He notes the way the rope has turned Will’s flesh red in spots where it winds around his wrists and forearms. It’s a little tight perhaps but Hannibal doesn’t need to worry about permanent damage *quite* yet.

Will moves easily, no resistance as he walks in front of Hannibal across the threshold from wood onto tile. Will’s apparent cooperation just makes him feel more irritated, more annoyed by whatever game Will is playing now. “I thought we weren’t going to play any more,” he snaps as he pushes Will’s shoulder hard, forcing him onto his knees.

It must hurt, because Will goes down quick, knees onto hard and cool marble tile and the thought of his discomfort sends a thrill through Hannibal’s gut. “Nothing to say,” Hannibal says, circling Will and turning to open the cabinet under the sink. He goes searching, finding what he’s after quickly.

The entire time it takes the enema bag to fill, he grows more irritated by Will’s continued silence. He runs the water a little colder than he knows is correct, would be *comfortable* but

then, none of this is about Will's comfort. He turns and watches Will, unmoving as he kneels, back straight and head up and looking like the perfect form of a perfect slave.

"I don't want you to hide," Hannibal says but maybe it's not worth anything. If his words were for anything, they were a warning, a *kindness* for Will. It's a signpost of where to watch out, of what is most likely to set off Hannibal's temper tonight.

Will doesn't respond though, so it's his own fault when Hannibal pushes the spot on his back between his pinched shoulder blades. He falls forward and Hannibal hears the noise of his chin hitting the floor, even as Will tries to catch the forward momentum of his torso with his chest instead. He closes his eyes, hoping that he hasn't damaged Will's face too much and kneels next to him, gently cupping Will's face and twisting his head to the side.

He can see Will's eye looking up at him, the other hidden from view and it's hard to read any expression from him, hard to tell what he's thinking. "If you're still going to play a game, well then I will just have to play too, won't I," he says with a grin but Will doesn't react to that particular taunt.

Hannibal moves Will's hips, already almost perfect but not quite. He presses Will's body slightly this way and that until he's got a perfect view of Will's still quite hairless asshole and he smiles at the sight. "Feeling vulnerable, Will?"

He doesn't expect an answer so he's pleasantly surprised when he hears Will's voice, sounding calm and rather bored. "I suppose so, master."

Hannibal shakes his head and retrieves the enema bag from the sink, hefting the weight of the filled bladder. "Do you think I should use some lubrication for this?" Hannibal asks, waving the end of the hose near his face. Will blinks at him and Hannibal smiles. "Oh I'm sure you've taken bigger things than this, it's just a hose Will."

It is just a hose, the nozzle slightly wider than the rest of the tube but it's a practical device, not one of the devices designed with purely sex in mind. He spreads Will's cheeks with one hand and looks at the pucker and can't resist blowing a carefully directed breath across the space between Will's legs.

"Do you like that?" he asks the words but he knows he'll get no answer, or perhaps he doesn't. Hannibal struggles to read Will's mood as much as his own. He's not sure what he feels himself, just that he wants to do *something* to Will and he'll pick the steps as he goes along.

He puts the enema bag down, sloshing and wet and he squeezes it slightly to get the air out and he drips some of the water from the nozzle on the back of Will's legs. Will's left calf muscle twitches involuntarily and Hannibal licks his lips at the sight.

He spreads Will's buttocks again, spreading the span of his hand as wide as he can to get a better view. He dribbles more water down over Will's ass and he presses the nozzle, hard plastic and the opening harder and more angular than anything designed to be *pleasant*. He wants to say that Will is being a good boy but that would be too much of a reassurance. This is not about Will, not about making things nice for him or making him feel comfortable. It's

not even about cleaning him out for whatever Hannibal decides to do later, the idea already formed in the back of his head as it is. This is just about seeing what happens.

He presses the nozzle in and Will doesn't make a sound despite how uncomfortable he must be. Hannibal is in turns proud and annoyed anew. He picks up the enema bag and slowly raises it, the first flow of water starting to move into Will's body at a steady rate as it fills him.

Hannibal stays perfectly still, holding the bag and trying to see if he can see the bag deflating. It's moving but so slowly, the rate steady but agonising as he waits. His eyes run down the length of the hose, to where it disappears into Will's asshole, his own fingers close by to hold it in place should he need to.

While the act should not be boring, Hannibal finds himself grow bored of *waiting*. He doesn't want to draw this out longer for himself while at the same time wanting to torture Will in every little way that he can. He taps his tongue to the roof of his mouth, finding a rhythm before sighing loudly. Will reminds silent and unmoving and perhaps it will be worth speeding this up.

Hannibal readjusts the bag as the flow pulled by gravity alone slows. He slides his hand down the plastic bladder to squeeze at the top, increasing the pressure. The hose is narrow and even the small additional increase must surely be increasing the pressure of water inside. He squeezes harder, the bag emptying quicker and quicker now and he looks to how Will's belly seems different, slightly round as gravity pulls his insides down under his belly button. *Good boy*, Hannibal thinks but makes sure not to say. Will can discover how much of a good boy he's been afterwards, if he reacts how Hannibal would like.

The bag empties the rest of the way with Hannibal squeezing it, forcing the liquid into Will's body and he pauses before pulling the nozzle free. "You hold this inside, I don't need to give you consequences for disobeying do I?"

"No master," says Will softly and there seems to be a note of tension in his voice, perhaps already hurting at the fullness, at the cold being pulled inside him by the force of gravity.

Hannibal slips the nozzle free and moves to the sink, dumping the empty bag into it and looking at himself in the mirror. He combs fingers through his hair and straightens his shirt, rearranging where he's rolled his sleeves. He preens for just a minute but a minute must feel like an eternity to Will in this state and he catches his own reflection smiling back at him.

He turns back, watching Will's back tremor slightly, his thighs twitch and it's all a sign of failure. The thought of Will failing this little test is both intriguing and infuriating. "I thought you were stronger than that," he says softly and Will's eyes meet his, from where his face is pressed against the tile.

"I'm trying, master," says Will, voice so soft and yet clear as day in the echoing bathroom. Hannibal shakes his head and steps quickly out of the bathroom, retrieving one of the smaller buttplugs from the group of toys on the bed and returning. He finds himself rather *generous*, so very *benevolent* as he presses the dry plug against Will's dry ass. Will makes a noise, sudden but damped down the second it's out of his throat as Hannibal pushes the plug inside.

It's small, far smaller than Will is no doubt used to but water does not make a good lubricant. "Thank you," Will whispers and Hannibal has to wonder if he could possibly mean it, given how little use it will be in holding the water in. It all sounds far too much like the words of a submissive little plaything, the kind of creature Will's been acting like before not just with Hannibal but with countless other masters. Hannibal doesn't want the Will that everyone else has gotten to see, he wants his *own* version, the *real* version. He shakes his head and turns away, leaving the bathroom if only to clear his head for a moment.

Hannibal removes his shirt, folding it carefully, neatly. He removes his pants and each following item of clothing, putting each away in exactly its place one by one. He takes his time and can't help but wonder about how Will is doing in the bathroom without him. He's silent in there and Hannibal longs to hear noises, more noises, something else more than that single solitary surprised sound. The memory of that noise brings a smile to Hannibal's lips.

Hannibal returns to the bathroom as nude as his slave now and he watches from the back how Will's back shudders, his buttocks clench, as he tries to hold his body in line. Hannibal likes the sight, likes how Will's tummy seems to to bulge a little between his legs with all the fluid in him. As much as he'd like to see Will suffer just a little longer, just a little more *painfully*, he also wants to keep Will on his toes and surprised.

He's gentle when he lifts Will's shoulders from the floor, brings him and helps him stand by supporting him. It's intimate when he helps Will move to the toilet, caressing hands along his sides and stomach. When he slides the buttplug out and helps Will sit down, it feels more intimate than he can remember feeling with a slave. He's been closer, been inside them in more ways than one, they've been inside *him*, as meals at least. This feels different and he doesn't even wrinkle his nose at the sound Will makes when he releases his bowels.

Will's face flushes and he looks down and Hannibal can't help but find his discomfort and embarrassment quite adorable. He runs his hand down Will's chest, pressing at the muscles along his torso and pinching at the soft skin of Will's stomach. Will shifts a little under the attention apparently very aware that he's sitting naked on a toilet in front of his owner. Hannibal smiles, all teeth and twisted pleasure. "Up."

Will stumbles slightly, swaying awkwardly when he stands. He seems more unsteady, unfocused and unable to balance without the use of his arms than Hannibal would have anticipated. Hannibal steers him, holding his bicep and pushing him in front. They step out into the bedroom and when Hannibal pushes Will towards the bed, he collapses onto it, falling forward with a small bounce. Perhaps he did it on purpose or perhaps he is simply that inelegant in his movements, distracted as he seems to be. Hannibal leans down and turns Will's face to give himself the best angle to view his expression. Will looks up at him but he doesn't seem to be revealing much of his inner thoughts right at this moment.

Hannibal strokes Will's cheek softly, *lovingly* and he enjoys the shape of Will's jaw and the bruised skin that draws a straight line down to underneath his collar. Hannibal runs his finger under the leather, around the back of Will's neck and can't resist leaning forward to lick his tongue along the flesh just there. Will tastes of sweat and the smell of leather taints his scent so near to his collar.

Hannibal can hear Will's breathing, can feel the heat from his body this close and he presses closer, the feeling of Will's body against his own a reminder of his own current state of nudity. He sniffs and licks down Will's spine, moving around the areas blocked by Will's bound arms. He leans above him as he traces his spine to his tailbone and where Will's hips are sliding slightly off the bed.

It's a vulnerable position for Will, part of why Hannibal intends to enjoy every moment of his evening. He bites his lip as he stands, taking a careful step back, and then another, giving himself a proper view of the big picture. He sees Will's head move slightly as he tries to see and he's not too hidden, not just yet. He will be broken though, snapped out of whatever it is he's pretending to be and Hannibal steps forward, slapping a hand across Will's right buttock *hard*. It's enough to make his own hand sting and the sound it makes seems so shockingly loud but Will still doesn't react much beyond a startled flinch. Hannibal watches a small shudder run through will's thighs as he tries to stop himself sliding off the bed but it's just not *enough*, it won't ever be.

Hannibal grabs Will's hips, harder than he needs to, digging his fingers into Will's hip bones as he pulls his pelvis up, forcing Will to hold his weight on his feet and stopping him from slipping further. Hannibal moves his slave's body like a doll, positioning and posing. He adjusts Will's head a little more, straining his neck so he'll be able to watch Hannibal and Hannibal will be able to watch him. He wants to see any and every reaction that his slave makes.

"It's not a punishment," Hannibal says, more to himself, more general musing than any comment directed at Will. "I don't mean to *punish* you, not at all." He picks up a paddle, then a crop, deciding which to play with and growing bored with each before he's even swung them once. He waves each item near Will's face so he can see, waits to find if there's any reaction worth pushing further but he's disappointed with each attempt.

Hannibal tuts softly as he picks up an inflatable butt plug and while Will doesn't react to the device, Hannibal is sick of searching. Perhaps Will is going to react when pushed further than Hannibal thinks, perhaps he's stronger than Hannibal suspects and the thought is enraging and intriguing in equal measure.

He picks up the lube, a new bottle rather than dealing with the last few drops in the one already opened. He tears the plastic wrapper from the cap with his teeth and smiles at Will's face, blank but for his eyes, *staring* at Hannibal. Hannibal enjoys being the subject of those eyes' study. He finds pleasure in Will watching him so very intently and he makes sure Will can see clearly as he drizzles a little lube on the plug.

It's a pity Will can't see when Hannibal moves behind him but he can certainly *feel* the cold lube that Hannibal pours into the crack of his ass, especially if the minute jerking movement he makes is anything to go by. He's trying to hide his reactions but he can't hide forever, no one can.

Hannibal presses fingers against Will's hole, sliding around and down, dribbling more lube and making a mess. Hannibal despises leaving messes and yet he can't resist the thought of making a mess out of *Will*. He slides a finger inside and then another and he feels each little twitch and clench of Will's body. He can't hide *this* reaction and Hannibal delights in

pumping his fingers in and out a bit, two then three, spreading Will a little wider with each movement. He gets caught up in it, the greasy slide and the warmth of Will's body around his fingers and he drops the plug, forgotten, onto the floor.

Hannibal pours more lube and slides his pinky in next to his other fingers, bringing his fingers together into a point and pressing firmly, trying to *feel* more of Will around his own skin. Will whimpers then, sudden and sounding so very loud in the quiet of the room, in the quiet of the place Hannibal has allowed himself to get lost. He leans to the side a little to see Will's face, sees how Will's eyes are narrowed now, unable to hide *everything*. Hannibal smiles as he looks down at where his fingers twist in Will's ass. "Do you think I can get my hand in, Will?"

Will doesn't answer but Hannibal doesn't want him to. Perhaps Will is giving Hannibal at least a little something of what he wants and he presses again, hitting up against the widest point of his knuckles and Will makes a noise again that sounds like a pained groan but it's so held back, he's still *trying* so hard and Hannibal finds it all so delightful. He wants to control Will, *feel* Will and he knows his hands are large, he's already so impressed that Will hasn't started crying yet. What will it take to bring tears to those eyes?

Hannibal twists and slides and he reaches for the lube again, drizzling even more and he listens to the sick squelch of the sound their skin is making against each other. Will feels warm and so *tight* because with this much in his ass, it would be a wonder he could feel anything *but* tight. Hannibal isn't aware of arousal now, what he feels might not even be sexual in nature, he just wants to see what will happen. It's all an experiment, a test and he delights in each new piece of information, each new twitch of Will's body and the grimace on his face as Hannibal presses forward more.

It shouldn't fit, shouldn't happen, Will should come apart and be broken and torn when Hannibal makes it just past his knuckles. There's not enough space inside his body for this and yet Hannibal gets there, butting up against the base of his thumb. He rubs his thumb around the outside and he looks at Will's face and sees the tears appearing there. Is he simply tearing up? Is he going to break? Hannibal can't be satisfied until he knows, can't be satisfied until he goes all the way.

He slides out slightly, enough to get his thumb lined up and it's easier now, the resistance forced loose against the desire of Will's flesh to stay tight and whole. It's easier, too easy but perhaps Hannibal doesn't realise the pressure he exerts, so eager he feels to accomplish this. His hand is sliding in and then he feels the suck of Will's body, sliding around his hand as it narrows towards his wrist.

He lets out a breath, feeling as though he needs air even though he hasn’t been holding his breath. Will gasps and suddenly it’s clear to Hannibal that Will *has* been holding his. He smiles and part of him wants to tell Will he’s proud, that he’s being a *good boy*, but he won’t. He tries to twist his hand but it’s too tight, he tries to move his fingers a little, feeling the warmth and snug tightness of Will’s body and he hears Will let out a gasp and it sounds like a sob.

Hannibal wishes he had a better view of Will’s face, a *clearer* view. Perhaps next time he’ll set up a mirror so he can watch properly but for now he makes do with what he can see of

Will's face, eyes wet and red and he is crying now, silent, for the most part.

"Don't hide it, don't hold back," he orders but who is to know if Will is going to listen to him. If Will is so inclined to give him what he wants, he'll give him this, he'll show his vulnerable parts, now that Hannibal has *made* him vulnerable.

He stands still, unmoving, listening, *watching* as Will falls apart. Wet tears roll down his cheeks but Hannibal can't tell what kind of tears they are. Is it the involuntary watering of eyes or is it something more than that, perhaps both together and Hannibal doesn't want to breathe, doesn't want to ruin this moment.

He must though, not for any worry over Will's comfort but for concern over his own. His hand feels too tight in the space, too cramped and it grows uncomfortable, his skin feeling too wet and damp and his hand cramping at the position. He pulls at his wrist but Will's body seems to want to hold him tight.

Hannibal runs his free hand along Will's lower back, down and around the skin close to his other wrist. He presses at the messy wetness there of excess lubricant and he pulls again, marvelling at how the skin here pulls taut with each tug. With each movement, Will doesn't hide his sounds. Each pull grants Hannibal's ears some new auditory pleasures.

Pretty pathetic little Will cries out when Hannibal forces his wrist free, the rest of his hand sliding easily and Will is red and wet and *open* down here and Hannibal can't help but *watch* as he pulses and twitches.

Hannibal looks at his own hand, wet and wrinkled and with the faint streak of blood where he's pushed too hard, pressed to quickly, *hurt* Will too much.

Will's hole doesn't stay open, not long enough though who can tell how long any of this has taken. Hannibal can't quite gauge the time. Will twitches and jerks, his thighs quivering, trying to hold himself upright as his body adjusts to emptiness. He gapes open still, but not as wide as he was before and Hannibal feels a strange sense of accomplishment, of pride in what Will has managed to take.

He wants to say something, anything and while he desires it, the energy to say something, to put together the words that would be right in this situation simply escapes him. He stands and watches, noting the slick dribble of lube and he looks down at his hand and notes the matching wetness that makes it's way from his fingertips. The blood and lube and something else on his hand reminding him how dirty and messy this is, as much in life is.

Hannibal turns and leaves Will, goes to the bathroom and washes his hands. He looks at himself in the mirror and smiles at his reflection. When he's together, clean and dry, he emerges and sees Will there, feet planted, legs mostly straight and holding his weight now. He moves closer, around the bed and sits near Will's head. He strokes Will's hair and he does it not to bring comfort to Will but to satisfy himself that what he saw earlier was real.

Tears cling to Will's eyelashes and his face is red from the crying rather than from a slap or squeeze. He's still so beautifully bruised and marked from earlier days but this mark is

different and he leans down and presses a kiss to Will's temple and smiles when he hears Will sniff pathetically.

Hannibal reaches and unties Will's arms, watching dispassionately as they flop uselessly on the bed next to his body. He watches Will's hips stutter slightly before he collapses some more, starting to slide on the bed and it's such a pathetic sight. Hannibal would not normally feel even pity for something so weak, something so pathetic. He doesn't feel pity for Will but he also doesn't think him weak, despite his current state.

He strokes the side of Will's face and can't keep the smile from his own lips. He pulls Will upright, feels how floppy and useless Will's body seems, as though he holds a lifeless corpse rather than his very much alive Will.

He curls Will close, holds him tight and positions him onto his lap, sitting under him and holding him close, Will's head tucked under his chin and a smile on his face. The smile only grows wider when Will's arms, slowly waking up, raise enough to hold him right back, pulling Will closer to his master's body. Hannibal strokes his back and listens as Will shudders and cries softly, against his chest. It's messy, but Hannibal doesn't mind, this time.

He lies so still and he waits for Will to speak or to fall asleep, whichever might happen first. It's neither though when, late into the night, Hannibal grows bored of waiting and he presses Will down onto the bed, turning away to get comfortable. He sleeps with Will next to him, a space in the bed between them and the faint sounds of Will's breathing behind him.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you dear readers for your recs and support thus far as this story nears the mid-point!

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

I hope the last chapter wasn't too intense for you ;)

A big thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal is up early, moving from the bed and heading straight for the shower. He doesn't linger too much on Will, on last night, his thoughts far more focused on the day ahead and work and his patients and what he'll wear. There are a hundred little thoughts that feel far more urgent right now than *Will*.

He does stop though, pausing before he leaves the bedroom to lean over Will. He's awake, perhaps stirred by Hannibal getting up to leave. Will's eye looks up at him, sideways, and they regard one another for a moment. Hannibal straightens and Will's hand comes out, catching his own before he can step backwards. "Have a nice day in work, master," Will says softly and Hannibal is thrown by the words, sounding so *normal*, the kind of platitude shared between friends or lovers. Will smiles sweetly and closes his eyes, snuggling down into the pillow and he lets his hand slip from Hannibal's wrist. Hannibal frowns for a moment but then it's gone, he glances around the room as he leaves, seeing the mess and the toys scattered on the floor near the foot of the bed where they've fallen in the night. He doesn't like a mess but it will be gone when he returns home. It better be.

Hannibal hadn't been thinking of Will and yet, now, he can't seem to remove him from his mind. He makes breakfast and he cooks an extra portion, leaving it for Will, if he gets up soon enough to enjoy it hot. He doesn't wait to find out, putting on his coat and leaving. He thinks about Will on the drive to his office and he thinks about Will when he welcomes his first patient of the day and he continues to think about him even during his more interesting sessions. He doesn't know how he expected Will to behave this morning. He's done the same, *worse* things, to other slaves. They cried, some begged him for comfort and grew almost cuddly, reaching out to him for comfort, others still withdrew. Will didn't cuddle at him, nor has he pulled away and yet he had seemed so lost, crying and broken and *sobbing* and Hannibal doesn't quite know what to make of things. New situations are fascinating even as he detests entering something without enough points of data to make a proper assessment of the situation at hand.

The day goes slowly and Hannibal finds himself sketching in his notebook where he should be noting down about his patients. He draws Will and gets frustrated at how difficult it seems to be to get his likeness just right. It's simply not perfect enough and he can't be satisfied until it is.

He returns home and he feels happy, excited to walk up the steps and unlock the front door. He moves through the house and he listens for Will, wondering where to find him and he goes into the kitchen, finding Will standing, half naked and posed and clearly *waiting* for him. Will pouts prettily and sighs, exaggerated, as he stretches more for show than anything else, Hannibal thinks. Will slides across the room and Hannibal's eyes drop across the front of Will's boxer briefs to his bare legs and Will seems so small and dangerous. He's exuding sexuality and every lick of his tongue, the way he bites his lip, is clearly designed to tease and arouse. Hannibal stands still as Will approaches, pressing close and leaning up to plant a chaste kiss on his lips. "Welcome home, master."

It's all been put together, a little act to entice and yet Hannibal feels angry, enraged, especially at himself for finding the image so appealing. "I told you I didn't want to play games any more," says Hannibal, turning to move past Will, around him. He turns back and sees Will's shoulders slump slightly, the air of sexuality gone from him in an instant.

"You wouldn't call last night a *game*?" Will's voice holds such a strong note of sarcasm, the kind of tone no well behaved slave would dare to take with a freeman let alone their owner. Hannibal smiles at him.

"I don’t want to play, I just want to take advantage of my property." Hannibal steps close, crowding Will who involuntarily backs up a little. Hannibal's smile turns feral as he sees the hesitation on Will's face. "Feeling sore, Will?"

Will's face flushes a little and he looks away. "What do you think?" he asks, sounding sullen and Hannibal reaches a hand up, forcing Will's chin back to look up at Hannibal's face.

"I think you're a little slut, Will. You can't even feel it when I fucked you before, you've had so many men, so many *things* inside you. Did my hand feel good?" Hannibal watches with delight as Will's lip quivers and the look in his eyes grows hard, angry. Good, thinks Hannibal, let him grow angry, and he presses Will up against the wall, going in for another bite, another nip at Will's sensitive parts. "This is what *you* want, you're just playing at this, pretending it’s for my benefit so you can be treated how *you* really want."

"Why are you doing this?" asks Will, voice barely a whisper and he looks so...*hurt*. For the briefest flicker of a moment, Hannibal feels sorry for him, but just for a moment.

"You're forcing me to, Will." He sighs and strokes Will's cheek. "If you'd just do as I ask and be honest, stop *pretending* like this, I wouldn't have to hurt you."

Will makes a low noise that sounds very much like he doesn't believe a word that Hannibal has said. He looks down, eyes away from Hannibal's even if his face is pointed towards him. He chews on his lip and he looks frankly *adorable*, too sweet and innocent, and Hannibal is hard pressed to believe that this is the slave that took a human life.

"The others were all either mad with repentance or completely dead to the world, the cruelty built up inside them from the start," says Hannibal, running a fingertip along Will's jaw. Will's eyes flick back to his for a fleeting moment and confusion settles across his brow. Hannibal sighs, dropping his hand from Will's face. "That's why I find you interesting Will,

this fire inside, it's not like the others. I could read them right away, knew exactly what they were thinking."

Will jerks a little, banging his head back against the wall and looking like Hannibal has just caught him doing something he's not supposed to be doing. "I don't understand," he says, his face settling into a mask and Hannibal is too tired to feel angry now. He's been thinking of Will all day, thinking about his slave and how he'll be and this is not what he had in mind.

"Are you sore?" asks Hannibal, kindly, almost managing to sound concerned. Will nods and Hannibal nods back. "Show me," he says softly and he steps back so that Will can turn, moving away from the wall and pulling his briefs down. Hannibal looks, pulling Will's cheeks apart but it's not for any pleasure but clinical, detached. There's no visible bleeding on the outside, nothing Hannibal would *worry* about but he does note how Will bends, stiff and barely moving his torso. He notes how very pink and puffed the whole area looks, tender and delicate and recovering. He watches as Will walks out of the room, off to search for clothing as Hannibal starts cooking dinner. He watches Will as he comes back, standing and leaning instead of perching on his usual stool and Hannibal almost feels guilty. He's changed their routine, switched things up and perhaps he hasn't actually gained any ground with Will at all for his troubles. He feels a little bad about it. *Almost*, after all, Will is still just a slave.

He moves through the kitchen, starting to prepare dinner but he doesn't find much joy in it, not tonight. He's distracted, listening for sounds of Will, watching for his reappearance at the door, trying to sort out how Will might be feeling right now. He's trying to process how he himself truly feels about the whole situation and yet all he seems to find himself doing is wondering about Will's take on things. He hopes Will might be more amenable to discussion tonight.

Dinner is no great affair or perfect masterpiece. It's still art, as always but it's not his best work, distracted as he is. He serves the plates and sits and doesn't start eating even though he doesn't wish the food to go cold. It can't have taken this long for Will to dress, to decide what to do and to come back downstairs and yet Hannibal won't entertain the idea that Will has decided *not* to return back to him. He waits.

His patience is not infinite and the food is cold. Hannibal still feels angry, frustrated with Will not just about his behaviour before but now about this rudeness as well. He stands, leaving his untouched plate and makes his way through the house, up the stairs.

Will's room is empty, deserted and quiet, even musty from lack of airing. Will has not spent a night in here in some time. It can scarcely be thought of as *Will's* room any more. He closes the door when he leaves, moving further into the house to his own bedroom and is once again disappointed to find it empty. He moves through the house, his own calmness disturbed by the thought of an escape. It happens all the time, slaves run, even though they know it's useless, even though they can be tracked and will be euthanised for that particular kind of misbehaviour. He clenches his jaw as he clears the upstairs, returning downstairs to search for his errant slave in the last possible places.

It's his home office, a lamp lit, and Will sitting in one of the leather armchairs. He's not doing anything; just sitting, waiting, perhaps. Hannibal almost turns to leave, so used to not finding Will. He breathes a sigh of relief and he walks into the room, sitting in front of Will.

Will seems to snap out of whatever haze he's fallen into, stops staring at nothing and turns and stares at Hannibal instead. Hannibal likes being the focus of Will's attention even as the feeling doesn't agree with him entirely. He crosses one leg over the other and sits back into the chair, eyeing Will up, evaluating him, trying to regain his composure and power through the careful telegraphing of his body language.

Neither speaks, at first, a silent conversation happening in eyes and faces instead. Hannibal can see Will's thoughts cross his face, concern and worry and everything showing in tiny twitches in the muscles of his brow and mouth. He smiles, carefully measured to appear calm, open, hiding the rage that he's holding down inside.

"You're not different from the others," says Will at last, quiet, measured. His eyes never leave Hannibal's and Hannibal knows that Will has seen how his own face shows the suspicion he feels at those words. "You think you are, you *believe* it. You are wrong, *master*." Will manages to make the word drip with so much loaded venom, shocking and tantalising, and *that* is what Hannibal seeks to unlock. His concern changes to a smile and he catches himself nodding in response.

"Tell me Will, how many masters have you had? How many more men have played with you?"

"You've read my file, you know the answer to the former." Will's voice is low, deliciously *dangerous* and Hannibal can't help the feeling of arousal that flares through him. He enjoys danger, viciousness.

"They all used you?" It's not something he expects Will to answer, at least not truthfully but he does.

"Yes, every single one. The *private* buyers at least. You know even when they didn't purchase me for that express purpose, they all want it, in the end." Will leans forward in his chair, leaning over his knees to get closer, to stick out his chin and *glare*. "Even you fell for it, tell me Doctor Lecter, which of us is it that *wants* it so much they can't control themselves?"

Hannibal wants Will, wants him badly and Will's words are just making him want him more. The thought of this slave outwitting him, or at least attempting to is beautiful, tantalisingly delicious like the finest of things in life. He nods, not bothering to hide the purse of lips as he considers Will in this moment.

He forces his mind to clear, to not think on the effect Will seems to be having, to not get so lost in it that he can't think any more. "This is your way of retaining your power, to make yourself believe that you seduced your owners into using your body in order to feel in control. It's easier for you to think that you wanted what happened last night and manipulated me into doing that to you, than to believe that you truly have no say in what is done to your body." He leans back further, settling into the leather of the chair and he smiles at Will, the kind of smug smile to show Will that he's quite aware of what Will is doing, and that it won't work. "Do tell me Will, how did you feel when you became a slave?"

Will suddenly chuckles, tilting his head and flashing a boyish smile. It seems not to break the mood entirely but to shift it, *bend* it. Will looks at him and nods. “Oh of course, you really read all of my file, Doctor Lecter.”

”*Master*.”

Will flashes him a look. “Of course, Master.” He closes his eyes for a moment, opening them and looking into Hannibal’s. His face seems open, like he’s not trying to hide any emotion that might pass across it. “My father liked to drink and gamble and any other vice he could get his hands on. A life like that leads to debt, *Master*.” He manages to imbue the final word with a sense that the word tastes foul in his mouth, like the flavour of the sound has lingered on his tongue.

”I was hoping for a more interesting story,” says Hannibal, surprised even as he says it that he is being so honest. He shakes his head. “Tell me about how you heard, what happened.”

Will shrugs and Hannibal can see the openness of his face give way to a certain level of guardedness. “I was in school, I was going to graduate and join the police force, I think. I mean, that’s what I think I would have done.” He hunches his shoulders slightly, body language closing off and Hannibal wants to tell him to stop, to grab him and stop him from slipping away like that. Will keeps talking though, keeps revealing and he looks up at Hannibal as the words come out. “I came home from school and he said we were going out. *That* was odd, not usual, he’d normally be sleeping off the night before even that late in the day. I didn’t want to go with him but he made me go and then….” Will sighs, blinking a little too frequently for someone who appeared so stone faced a moment ago. “The rest runs together a bit, a car ride, the broker, some paperwork, a signature and like that, everything was gone.”

”Gone?” asks Hannibal, seeking clarification and yet perhaps latching onto precisely the wrong word.

”Potential, whatever my life would have been, could have been, all gone.”

”And tell me, how long did it take you to accept it, to realise that your body was no longer your own?”

Will smirks, fleetingly, momentarily before giving Will that angelic, innocent look. He flutters his lashes prettily and bites his lip for a second before he answers. “A while, master, but I know my place now.” It’s a bold faced lie, that Hannibal has to believe Will knows wouldn’t be accepted just like that. He nods though, standing and leaving the room with the expectation that Will is going to follow him.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your support and feedback, it means a lot to me <3

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s good that Will seems to settle, that their routine has been established, for what it is. Hannibal is busy, distracted with plans and decisions to be made. It’s only a small gathering but it’s a gathering nonetheless and Hannibal will suffer nothing less than perfection.

Will sleeps in Hannibal’s bed and Hannibal fucks him in a way that is starting to feel too close to lovemaking, if Hannibal’s thoughts had a chance to linger on it for too long. He’ll reassert himself, redraw their boundaries when Will has grown comfortable, when Will is ready to be caught off guard entirely, until then, Hannibal is happy to let things lie exactly as they are.

He is too distracted in either case, selecting each recipe carefully and selecting his guestlist with measured intent. It’s not just about who he would like to see and who it is best to be seen *with*. He adds names to the list simply to create an interesting situation, to see how volatile elements might interact, especially in front of and around Will.

However settled it is that Will appears, he also at times seems distracted too, by thoughts that Hannibal can't read but desires to know. He wishes he could listen in to the voice in Will's head, or get him to speak them aloud, but then of course, they would be far less tantalising. Instead, Hannibal attempts to focus on the upcoming party.

Will must know what is going on, he's seen Hannibal working on his menu, watched him prepare items the few days before. He *knows* even if Hannibal hasn't told him. Slaves don't need to be informed of these things and yet Hannibal feels he should inform him, at least so he can tell him which outfit Hannibal has picked out for him. It's simple enough, to pull him aside and tell him that this evening, several of Hannibal's colleagues and peers will be arriving to enjoy a meal and that Will should be on his best behaviour. Hannibal thinks he delivers the latter instruction with enough of an indication that should Will decide to misbehave, to make things *interesting* that, well, Hannibal might like to see where that goes.

He greets his guests, even the odious ones invited for their connections to more interesting people or the access they can grant to certain doors than because Hannibal holds any desire to spend time with them. He tells Doctor Chilton that he found his latest book an interesting read, even if his treatise on the minds of freed slaves was not only a bore but completely off base in its conclusions. Hannibal manages to exude warmth to these guests, even feigning interest when Mrs Komeda has brought her own girl, a quiet tiny little thing that keeps her head down and walks right behind her mistress. She's dressed head to toe in black, severe

looking, high necked and long sleeved. Her hair is cut short. Mrs Komeda never could abide another woman distracting from her, not if she could help it.

Hannibal serves prosecco and the canapes he removed from the refrigerator an hour earlier. He talks and they sit in his drawing room and laugh at the best of mixed conversation. It is sometime before Hannibal grows impatient, excusing himself and walking out of the hallway to the kitchen under the guise of checking on dinner.

Will is in the kitchen, *hiding* and the thought that Will would try to keep himself hidden away annoys him. Any annoyance is tempered by how good Will looks, dressed in grey wool trousers and matching waistcoat. He doesn't wear a jacket or tie, shirt collar opened to reveal his collar and he has the perfect mix of formal but not too formal, he is after all a slave. Hannibal smiles and walks up to him, arranging the fabric of Will's shirt collar to artfully display the leather around his throat. He brushes his fingers along Will's shoulders, picks at invisible particles on his clothes and admires *his* slave.

"Go and refill their drinks," says Hannibal nodding towards the mostly full second bottle, sitting in the ice bucket on the counter. He waits for Will to complain, to say something, a reason or excuse not to interact with Hannibal's guests but he doesn't. He simply nods and turns, picking up the bottle and wrapping it in the crisp napkin to keep the cold glass from dripping.

Hannibal watches Will leave and as much as he wants to go and spy and see how Will behaves himself, he's also acutely aware that he has a dinner to attend to. He shrugs out of his jacket, hanging it across one of the stools for the time being as he checks on his roast.

Hannibal finishes up his work in the kitchen, setting out plates ready and waiting for their finishing touches of sides and proteins and sauces. He checks on the consomme and smiles at the aroma and he pauses before heading back. He's very aware that Will did not return, not right away, which of course means that his guests have insisted he *stay*. Perhaps that, or perhaps Will is not behaving himself and will need to be punished. There's nothing better than a public punishment to cause a special flavour of humility, a unique type of embarrassment. Hannibal thinks he would rather like to see Will's face if he was to be spanked in front of Hannibal's guests.

He is almost disappointed to find Will in perfect form, kneeling, back straight, in front of Doctor Chilton. Chilton is laughing with Doctor Gideon, making some lewd joke about slaves, or perhaps Hannibal has missed too much context and it's about *Will*. He clears his throat and Chilton looks up, grinning that stupid smile of his. Hannibal returns it, though his doesn't reach his eyes. "I hope you're all enjoying your evening so far." Hannibal remains the polite host as always and of course, they're all enthusiastic in their praise, even if he hasn't served them a morsel yet.

He invites them to sit and as they move past him towards the dining room, Mrs Komeda’s girl waiting in the front room, standing in a corner, tucked away out of sight and out of mind. As the guests pass one by one, Mrs Komeda leans close and says softly. "Your boy is quite handsome, very well trained, I must say Hannibal, a better pick than your last." She smiles at him and he nods in acknowledgement. So Will has so far been behaving himself but then there will be plenty of chances at dinner for Will's vulnerabilities to show. He leads them to

the dining room, directing each to their perfectly chosen seats to create the perfect chances of interesting interactions between his guests.

He leaves to create simple bowls of consomme, garnished with herbs and laid out on larger plates with some inedible arrangements below. They're perfect and he inhales the scent deep before turning to Will. Sweet Will, or at least a Will who seems to be trying his best to appear *sweet*. "I will sit with my guests and you will serve their bowls. I expect perfection, Will."

He doesn't wait for a response but instead returns to the dining table to bask in attention and glory. He needs to be here, present, when they see his food, when they taste it and he needs to see their faces, so blissfully ignorant as they ingest Hannibal's special creations.

Will enters, using his back to push the door and carrying plates with the ease of someone who has worked as a waiter in the past. Hannibal manages to avoid raising his eyebrows as Will places plates, returning twice more to bring the rest. He doesn't reveal to his guest that Will's perfection is anything other than expected and he avoids looking foolish when Will returns empty handed to kneel next to his master.

It's the proper place for a slave, at least in the classical sense. People don't tend to dine with slaves by their sides on their knees. It hasn't been fashionable since long before anyone at the table came to the age of owning their own slaves and yet Hannibal finds he likes it. He runs his fingers through Will's hair and Will practically *purrs* in response, leaning into the touch. Mrs Komeda, sitting to Hannibal's left and perfectly positioned for viewing this, comments again about how *sweet* his slave is, how loving and doting and if Hannibal didn't know the truth, he can see exactly how one might be taken in by Will's show of affection.

Hannibal leaves the table to go to the kitchen to serve the next course. He doesn't need to tell Will what to do, already on his feet and clearing the plates and pouring wine and acting the perfect slave. Hannibal is all at once glad not to be embarrassed in front of his guests, frustrated by another of Will's shifts in behaviour, and somewhat annoyed that he won't have an excuse to discipline Will with witnesses present.

He plates dishes, carefully arranging each item before moving to carve the resting meat. It takes some time, a long time and he knows his guests are waiting. It's no matter though, they will wait.

Will returns to the kitchen after a time and watches him. They don't speak even though Hannibal wishes to ask questions. He doesn't expect productive conversation at the moment but he smiles at Will, perhaps even feeling fondness mixed with the suspicion over Will's behaviour.

He returns and sits and Will carries the plates in two by two. Hannibal describes the dish, using carefully chosen words to excite the mind before the scent and taste will excite the nose and palate. Will returns and kneels next to him and he even leans his head against Hannibal's thigh for a moment, a small press to remind him how close he is.

Hannibal carries on dinner conversation, the types of conversations he invites influential guests to his home in order to have. He enjoys being part of this, feeling elite and important and better for it. He may have no respect for some of his guests but they all bring him closer

to where he desires to be and even the irritating Chilton brings some amusement, especially when Doctor Gideon mocks him about the quality of his latest research. All in good fun they'd claim but Hannibal savours the hurt that Chilton can't hide even when he tries.

They enjoy their meal and sip after dinner espresso and Mrs Komeda asks Hannibal if she might give Will the one of the chocolates he's set out for with their coffee. He agrees, not quite able to hide the distaste from his face as he watches her press it against Will's lips. He takes it from her fingers with his mouth and he flutters his eyelashes at her. He chews and swallows, managing to make the simple motion seem obscene and he thanks Mrs Komeda softly before leaning against Hannibal's thigh and looking up at him. "Thank you, master," he whispers and Mrs Komeda coos, waving her hand at Doctor Gideon.

"Oh he is a sweet thing, not like Hannibal's usual sort at all." She smiles at Will again before turning to Doctor Chilton on her left and she's chatting again about some other topic entirely.

Hannibal looks up and catches Gideon's smirk and Hannibal resists the eyeroll he's itching to throw right back at him. Yes, Will's behaviour is not like the last slave they saw him with at *all*.

They sip after dinner drinks in the drawing room and the conversation continues on about the latest opera and society gossip. Hannibal would usually love to hear these things, would eagerly participate but all he can think of is his slave, kneeling by his thigh. He pets Will's head absently, tightening his fingers in Will's hair just a fraction too much. He feels rather than hears the way Will stiffens with a sharp intake of breath. The others don't seem to notice, perhaps Mrs Komeda did but Hannibal can't rightly care, already looking forward to them leaving so he can have a *real* conversation.

Hannibal despises the man, vile creature, but he has the decency to prompt the guests to start leaving so Hannibal can't bring himself to hate Chilton too much that evening. He helps Mrs Komeda into her coat and she offers to get him tickets to the opening night of the new year's performance of Il Barbiere di Siviglia. It reminds him why he keeps inviting the old bag to his home.

He shakes Gideon's hand who leans in close and says softly, "I can see why you want us to leave, enjoy your evening." He winks at Hannibal, glancing quickly over his shoulder and as he puts on his coat, Hannibal looks to see what he was glancing at. Will stands in the hallway leading to the kitchen looking sweet and delightful, big eyes and innocent butter-wouldn't-melt face and he is not at all the devious little Will that Hannibal has started to unravel.

He closes the door behind Gideon's back and just like that, the house is once more quiet and he turns to look at Will. Will smiles at him, all sweetness and *insolence*. Hannibal can feel his lips raise, unable to keep the snarl from his face and he looks at him. "You were well behaved this evening." The words don't match at all with the tone in which he says them and Will's face changes, going from sweet smile to blank and hidden expression in the blink of an eye.

"Well I didn't want your guests to think I was a badly behaved slave...Master." He manages to make the title sound like an insult.

”I’m sure that was your reasoning, Will.” Hannibal pushes past him, moving into the kitchen to take a wine glass and pour the last of the bottle still out on the countertop. He hears Will follow him but he doesn’t turn, lifting the glass to his lips and swallowing a mouthful. He’s had a few glasses now, not drunk but warm, the edges of things a little hazy.

”I thought you wanted the truth, Master.” Hannibal turns and sees Will, arms folded and leaning his hip against the doorway. He tilts his head at Hannibal, showing the signs of a lingering bruise on the left side of his neck. There’s no doubt that Mrs Komeda saw the bruises, was looking at them whenever she looked down at where Will was kneeling.

”Oh, I see,” says Hannibal quietly. He shakes his head, smiling. “You think you’re being clever, as though you might get away with more if outsiders think I am an unreasonable slave owner.” He puts down his glass, stalking across the floor, pushing up against Will, pressing him against the doorframe so much that Will’s shoulders are forced back on either side. He looks up at Hannibal, looking vulnerable and yet Hannibal doesn't believe it, not for a moment.

”I don’t need to get away with anything if people don’t think there’s anything to get away *with*.” Will grins then, and Hannibal knows that he’s seeing the edges peeling back and away, revealing rawness and realness underneath.

”Is that so? You think you can outsmart me? Escape? There’s no way out Will, even if you did kill me.” He’s not sure why he jumped to the thought of Will’s hands being the cause of his own death but he’s thought about killing Will often enough. The idea of reciprocation seems appealing and Hannibal can feel a kind of invisible pull forwards, closer. He leans down and he presses his lips against Will’s.

Will kisses back, tongue and teeth and all around the violent little feral creature that Hannibal thought he might be. Perhaps it is another act, another version of the performance but he’s just drunk enough not to care about anything other than feeling good.

Will’s leg wraps around the back of his calf, pulling him slightly off balance and they’re moving and tumbling and Hannibal isn’t too sure how or where or why but they’re moving through the house and shedding clothing and he just wants to be inside Will now, whatever it means. He wants to taste and connect with this dark little thing, this cunning beast.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you dear readers for your support as this story moves ever onwards....

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

Thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal didn't get that drunk the night before and he's not a person who gets hangovers. Yet he wakes feeling exhausted, not wanting to move and when he finally does open his eyes, it's to Will's face, watching him calmly. Will props his head on one hand and runs the fingers of his other across Hannibal's chest, raking his fingers through Hannibal's chest hair. "Good morning," Will says softly and he smiles in a way which might suggest to the casual observer that he actually is happy to see Hannibal awake.

Hannibal looks at Will, taking in his face and the lines of his neck, the black of his collar and the silver tag hanging from the front. His chest is bare, disappearing under the sheets of the bed and Hannibal remembers vaguely going to bed with Will, of being on top of him and he thinks they had sex but was it something slow and sensual or rough and punishing? He remembers the mood he was in last night and the puzzlement this morning must show on his face because Will sighs and speaks again. "You fell asleep before getting anywhere, I think you drank more than you thought."

"That's sounding a bit like insubordination, Will." He says the words but he doesn't really mean them. He doesn't really wish to converse, or even to think about Will. He both wants to sleep and get up, needing to pee and wanting to eat and drink and feel alive again. He grunts, rolling over to his other side to get out of the bed. He's unsteady, the blood rushing to his head but he hides it well enough, he thinks.

He feels better after emptying his bladder and he pauses in front of the mirror to see how messed his hair is, how bloodshot his eyes. It doesn't matter though, the rest of the weekend ahead and no further plans. He returns to the bedroom naked and he looks at Will lying in the bed, sheets pulled up to his neck and he suddenly feels very much exposed. Will looks him up and down, lingering a moment on Hannibal's flaccid penis and then he smirks again. "You couldn't get it up last night," Will says, the smirk growing wider, crueler, as though he thinks *that* is going to hurt Hannibal's feelings. Hannibal shrugs.

"I suppose I was drunk, you think that's going to upset me Will? I thought you better than that."

Hannibal slides back under the sheets, curling on his side to face Will and they eye each other, both clearly thinking and analysing but neither speaking for some silent minutes. Will smiles still, more of a smirk, evil and calculating and Hannibal thinks back over last night, about Will's behaviour. "You're planning something?" Hannibal asks, although they both

know he doesn't need to ask it. Will rolls his eyes and Hannibal can't help but laugh, his throat feeling dry and rough and reminding him about how good some coffee would taste. "Scheming conniving little Will, I'll figure you out."

Will makes a movement that if he were sitting upright might be construed as a shrug. He purses his lips and narrows his eyes, looking at Hannibal in that thoughtful way and all over again Hannibal wishes he could read his thoughts, truly know what goes on behind those eyes. "Ah, silent on that, Will."

"I wouldn't be very smart if I told you I was planning something. *If* I were planning something." Will smiles then, face shifting to sweetness again and Hannibal narrows his eyes at his slave. Will pouts a little as he flutters his eyelashes, looking like the parody of the perfect little bed slave as he was last night. "I just want to please you master, that's all I want."

"And why is that?" Hannibal does want to know, he wants to understand. Will isn't some brainwashed slave, at least nothing he's done up until now has suggested that. He's had others who were so caught up in their roles, who had known so little else, that it was all they were capable of being. Will is something else though, and Hannibal has had other slaves with similar backgrounds, with a similar start to life. Yet Will has been different, interesting in a way that none of the others quite were, and Hannibal has seen the edges of the act, the suit that Will seems to put on. He's up to *something* and Hannibal would love to know his end game, *needs* to know what his end goal might be.

"What is it you want master? From your slaves." Will smiles after saying the word but he seems almost sad for a moment before he's back to looking blandly sweet.

"Your job is to serve me Will."

"I don't believe for a moment that the only fault with the others was that they didn't *serve* you. What did they do to displease you?"

"It doesn't matter," says Hannibal and it really doesn't. Hannibal has disposed of the others for a dozen different reasons that Will doesn't need to know, he doesn't need to know about the details and the names, he doesn't need to know the exact number of predecessors he's had. In the end it had all boiled down to boredom and while Will isn't boring right now, he will be one day, they all grow stale eventually.

Will nods but it's more a mindless motion than agreement. "So you don't know how long you're planning on keeping me. Do you?"

Hannibal sits up then, sliding the sheets off and boring of this conversation that seems to be supplying Will with more information than he himself wishes to share. He doesn't like the idea of Will gathering cards, obtaining points of information that he might try to play later. He goes to his wardrobe to remove a robe, sliding it on with his back to the bed.

"I don't really mind," says Will and Hannibal turns back to see him lying on his back, staring up at the ceiling. Hannibal ties his robe and Will continues to speak to the ceiling, sounding distant, detached from the words. "They all grow bored eventually you know but I *know* that

you're different. I'm not just going to be sold on to someone else this time around." How Will has that part figured, Hannibal doesn't know, doesn't particularly care really. Will seems open and bright, he seems like he pays attention, he's picked up enough hints and clues to follow along with what may have come before in his current master's home.

“You don’t sound upset by the uncertainty.” Hannibal tugs at the belt of his robe, as though he’s tightening it and yet it’s just something to do with his hands. He watches Will as he stretches, yawning.

”A slave’s life is nothing but uncertainty, master.”

Hannibal smiles, opening the bedroom door and slipping out of the room to search for coffee and breakfast. He ponders how very different Will’s outlook on life must be to his own. Uncertainty can certainly be *interesting* but Hannibal prides himself on being completely and utterly in control of his life.

He scrambles eggs and considers that it’s been far too long since he restocked his pantry. He needs meat, needs to hunt for his food on that primal level and he thinks that perhaps it’s time to dispose of another card from his rolodex.

Will appears as Hannibal serves his plate and he sees the way Will looks at the food and is reminded that Will hasn’t eaten, not properly anyway. His nightly fast has gone on a lot longer than Hannibal’s.

Hannibal pushes the prepared plate towards the counter by Will’s usual stool and returns the pan to the heat. It’s no matter, just a few minutes longer to craft a breakfast fit for his own stomach. The first take wasn’t quite perfect enough, after all.

”How much longer until I beat your record?” Will asks between bites of egg. Hannibal pauses in his movements to look at Will who grins at him.

Hannibal shrugs. “Which record Will?” He has an idea of what Will is asking but he’d rather make him ask, properly.

”Until I’ve lasted the longest out of all of your slaves.”

”A few more weeks yet Will,” says Hannibal with a smile, tipping his own portion of eggs from the pan onto a plate and garnishing with parsley. He sips at the coffee that’s been standing on the worktop, cooling slightly to the point of being just right.

”I see, you really do lose interest quickly.” Will continues eating, scooping forkfuls of egg into his mouth ravenously.

”Is that what you want then Will? To outlast the others?”

Will shrugs, looking at his plate. “Doesn’t matter,” he says quietly and Hannibal nods as he carries his plate to sit at the counter next to Will.

They eat in silence, Will finishing his meal quickly and sitting to watch Hannibal with a thoughtful look on his face. Hannibal doesn’t mind being watched, enjoying being the focus

of Will’s thoughts at least. He feels more alert, better already with food in his stomach.

"So tell me Will, why is it that you tried so hard to impress my guests last night?" Hannibal doesn't look up from his plate, gauging that he might perhaps get a better response if Will doesn't have to look him in the eye while answering.

"Why do you think I was trying to impress your guests master? You're the only one who I want to please." Hannibal glances up and sees Will watching him, smiling and looking somehow tired, fatigued. Perhaps he's tired from lack of sleep or perhaps he's merely exhausted from lying. Hannibal knows how tiring keeping up a facade can be. He smiles and looks back down at his plate as he listens to the sound of Will shifting awkwardly on his seat.

"You put on a show for them Will, I don't believe for one moment that you were trying to impress me when you haven't been that affectionate with me alone."

"Well..." Will starts speaking and then stops suddenly. Hannibal looks at him again and sees Will chewing on his lip and Hannibal has to laugh. Is Will thinking of some of the times he'd sought out Hannibal's bed, came to him willingly or at least with the implication that it was willing, that he *wanted* it. Hannibal chuckles and Will looks at him sideways, releasing his lip with a sigh. "Maybe I'm planning for the future," he says darkly and Hannibal has to think how naive a thought that must be, to think that Hannibal would ever let someone else purchase him.

"You're too old for that," says Hannibal and he tells himself he doesn't mean to be so cruel but he knows he does. He smiles and narrows his eyes at Will and he's surprised to see Will roll his eyes back.

"I never said I wanted that particular future, *master*." Will flutters his eyelashes and pushes his plate away from himself, finished at last.

Hannibal finishes his own meal, allowing the words to sit, for Will to think about what he's revealed. Well, Hannibal doesn't know that much more about Will but he knows a little more, a little something to add to the list, or rather, something to remove. He stands and brings his plate to the sink, leaving the dishes for Will as he purses his lips, considering what to say, if anything.

"Tell me Will, are you hoping you can beat the odds and that I'll keep you?"

Will snorts, but stops himself from breaking into full laughter. "No," he says quietly, coming up beside Hannibal to place his own empty plate in the sink. He rolls up his sleeves and Hannibal steps aside, watching Will rinse the plates and begin washing them carefully. Hannibal doesn't trust dishwashers, not for his bone china plates.

"Interesting," says Hannibal but he's aware how lost his own voice sounds. Surely Will must realise how lost Hannibal is, how unsure of the direction things are going in. He catches Will's eye as he turns to look at him and Will smiles at him.

"Perhaps I'm just giving you what you want," says Will so softly his voice is barely audible over the sound of running water from the tap. Hannibal's annoyance at the words must show

on his face because Will is explaining himself right away. "Isn't that what you wanted?" he asks, "A challenge?"

"Ah, perhaps I wanted a challenge, but then again, perhaps I just want the real you, whoever that is."

"And if the real me is boring? What then?"

Hannibal shrugs and turns to head back upstairs. He walks slowly, expecting Will to fall for the bluff and call out, to give him another tidbit of information. He doesn't and Hannibal is disappointed to have to climb the stairs and dress in comfortable and casual clothes for a quiet weekend to himself.

Hannibal sits and waits for Will to bring the newspapers. He does, eventually, after collecting them from outside and Hannibal pages through, noting with interest an article about the still unsolved disappearance of an IT technician that ran his own consultancy. What a pity for someone so rude to have vanished. Hannibal would have liked to create a display of the man but he'd been so very ugly, so visually unappealing that even he struggled to see the artistry in his corpse. It was easier to dump the body out of sight.

Hannibal finds his mind drifting as he reads, not taking in the words that his eyes are passing over and he returns again and again to Will and what on earth he's going to do with that slave.

He considers moving things up but he's only taken two all the way to a kill and neither was able to take it, neither worked out in the end. Perhaps Will is going to be different but Hannibal has a disturbing sense of unease about the idea. If he takes Will and he can't take it, then Hannibal will have to kill him. It would be pointless to continue on after that and yet Hannibal isn't quite ready to call it a day and end whatever is happening. He folds the newspaper and stares into space and tries to weigh up the pros and cons but can't seem to find a deciding factor.

Ultimately, he'll have to do it, he knows it, deep inside. Better to do it before he grows attached, before Will works his way under his skin any further. Better to know and have killing Will be a moment of joy rather than the disappointing ending to what might have been. He'd rather know right now if Will is the one or not.

He moves through the house and pulls out his Rolodex and starts seeking the perfect pig. He already has criteria in mind, no one too vulnerable, no one that might put Will off and if Hannibal thought any further about what he's planning, if he could step outside himself and comment, he might point out that he's making things as easy as possible for Will, setting him up for the best chance of success. If he could step away and speak to himself he'd probably point out that he never did that with any of the others. Perhaps Will is special after all.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your support, it makes my little writer heart grow <3

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal packs up the items he'll need, the period of time marked out in his day when he'll slip away and slaughter the creature. It's time now, long enough since he referred this particular patient that it will not trace back to Hannibal.

He knows how he'll do it, entering the house before the pig gets home from work. He'll wait there until he shows up and then Hannibal will have all the time in the world to do it. He should plan for how to get Will to be the one to end it, the final slice to do it. Will knows how to slice a throat so that a pig can bleed out efficiently. It's not so different.

Hannibal doesn't take Will with him and he's hard pressed to articulate why exactly to himself. He needs to test Will, needs to stop dragging this out for himself and yet it seems as though that is precisely what he has done. This thing with Will drags on endlessly, or at least longer than it needs to. In part because of his own hesitation and partly because of Will. His current slave is so cunning and sweet and malicious and obtuse and mischievous. He is hiding from Hannibal and Hannibal does not like that, not at all.

Hannibal sits by himself in the home of this stupid pig of a man. He sits in the dark and listens for the sounds of his car pulling up to the house and he didn't plan on thinking about Will and yet it's all he can think of.

It's not thoughts so much of *Will* but of the situation, of how he might get under Will's skin as much as Will is succeeding at getting under his. He wants to know how Will thinks, wants to see inside his head and find out how he ticks in a way that he doesn't really care about with his own patients.

Psychiatry had been fascinating when it was the study of some abstract concept of the human mind, something interesting and hard to define. Yet the world is full of pigs with so few his equal, so few that interest him and while his games with slaves bring him occasional joyous moments of escape, he is always brought right back to how separate he is from the other beings around him. Even an interesting slave is just a slave, even lower than the pigs Hannibal enjoys butchering.

He moves through the house like a predator, efficiently dispatching his prey when it returns home and he should be enjoying this and while he still *does* enjoy it, there's a certain something lacking from it too. Perhaps it would have been better with company. What good is anything without someone to share it with.

Hannibal selects the best cuts of meat from a paltry selection. He has his favourites and as he slices and dissects and butchers, he can't help but imagine meals he might create for Will. He wants to take care of him and destroy him in equal measure and Hannibal doesn't like it, doesn't like how out of control Will has begun to make him feel.

He couldn't even control his desire to bring Will with him tonight, to make *him* hold the knife. It would have decided things once and for all and yet the dream that Will might appreciate this, might share Hannibal's desire for this is both tantalising and terrifying. Hannibal has never felt scared in his life, not truly but he has to wonder if it feels anything like how he feels when he considers the possibility that Will might reject this, reject *him*.

Hannibal wraps up his choice cuts, taking far more than his usual selection. He lays out the body and considers making a display of it. There's not much to be done with it, as cut open as it is. Hannibal is annoyed at how sloppy his butchery looks today, distracted as he has been and he shakes his head at the sight.

He cleans up, hiding evidence with the practice hands of someone who has been doing this long enough to know what the police will look for in the murder of a free person in their own home. He takes his things and slips away, walking swiftly to his arranged exit and his waiting car. He is so practiced at this now that there's no thrill, not after the first gush of blood and then the look of death. Hannibal will never lose his joy of that, will never feel more alive than he does in that moment of taking a life. He can relive it later, create a beautiful meal and even take joy in feeding the pig to others, of transforming its flesh into something far more palatable than it was when it was a person.

He drives home and the closer he gets, the more aware he is that Will is in the house, is there. He slows down despite his previously carefully chosen speed. Sometimes driving too slowly can draw the attention more than driving too fast and yet he doesn't want to be home, not yet. He's not sure what he'll do when he gets there and yet he can't delay the inevitable forever.

He gets home and he hangs the meat that needs to be hung and he refrigerates what needs to be refrigerated and he puts away his equipment but none of it takes as long as he really needs to prepare himself.

He goes upstairs and he lingers by Will's door before going down the hallway to his own room and of course Will is curled up in his bed. Hannibal had told him he'd be home late, had encouraged him to go to sleep if he was tired. He'd left the choice of bedroom open to interpretation and Will has chosen correctly or perhaps it's incorrectly. Hannibal can't quite seem to make his mind up on that point.

He moves as silently as he can, undressing and slipping into the bed and yet Will turns, woken by the dip of the mattress and he presses close and when he kisses Hannibal, it's the kiss of a lover, not a slave. Hannibal doesn't like what Will is up to, whatever game this is and he presses Will down onto the bed, biting at his lip and listening to him whimpering softly between breathless gasps.

Hannibal reaches down and finds Will's cock, flaccid but waking up and he squeezes harder than would be strictly necessary to excite. He doesn't want to enjoy this, doesn't want Will to

enjoy this. He just needs something, a release that he can't have, one that a simple orgasm isn't going to provide.

He rolls his pelvis against Will's hip and tries to excite himself but it's not happening quickly enough. He pushes himself upwards on his hands so he can look at Will, his face materialising out of the dark as his eyes make out the slight shine against the whites of Will's eyes.

Will licks his lips and whispers, "let me." He sits up and Hannibal lets Will press him back and he lies still as Will moves down his body, starts to lick and suck his cock and encourage it to hardness.

He lies and stares at the ceiling and wonders if it might be considered in poor taste to install a mirror above the bed. He listens to the sounds as Will slurps and sucks and takes Hannibal deep in his throat and this is not the act of an open and accessible Will, this is not the real Will but another play, another move in a dance that Hannibal no longer wishes to participate in. He stares at the ceiling and he feels the orgasm hit him suddenly and unexpectedly and Will swallows around him and Hannibal realises that he's been fisting his fingers into Will's hair, pulling at the strands.

Will's hair has grown just enough; before when Hannibal grabbed at it, it was just too short to be comfortable. It would slide from his grip, slipping from between his fingers and yet now he can hold onto it. He grips hard and he presses Will's head down long after he's come.

He feels Will twitch a little, holds him still even as he counts the seconds, knows how long it will take for Will to run out of air and *need* to breathe. He holds him longer and longer, holds him until Will's fingernails scrape at him, panicking and scratching and struggling and Hannibal holds him until he feels Will's panic take over and even still Will doesn't *bite* him. He lets him up and Will rolls onto his side gasping and wheezing and Hannibal smiles up at the ceiling.

Hannibal knows that Will isn't so well trained as he'd like Hannibal to believe. He's not some perfect little slave who would go peacefully to death with their master's cock down their throat. He's not that far gone, not yet. There is fire in his slave and Hannibal wants to see it burn.

He lies still, unmoving and he smiles as he closes his eyes, listening to the panting wheezing panicked breaths. It's music and beautiful and as it slows, as Will gets his breath back, Hannibal feels the bed shifting and he expects Will to curl close, to try and appease him perhaps. Will doesn't, he lies next to Hannibal but there's a space between them, a space that Hannibal knows must be filled, but with what, is yet to be seen.

Will lies with his back to Hannibal and Hannibal expects him to nod off, for them both to sleep, so he's surprised when Will speaks. "Thank you, master," he says quietly, his voice sounding so rough and coarse. It's a reminder of the feeling and for a moment, Hannibal can feel the jolt that goes through him when he kills some challenging prey. It's been far too long and he smiles in the dark, unseen by anyone.

"Do you wish me to say you're welcome, wish me to play into something, Will?"

”Play into *what*?” Will’s voice sounds strained, and not simply because of how sore his throat must be feeling.

”I don’t know,” says Hannibal and as he says the words, he realises just how uncomfortable Will has been making him feel. He is not the one who doesn’t know. He buys the slave and he knows their history, he’s seen it all and he is the one who is a mystery. While he knows Will hasn’t figured him out just yet, *can’t* have figured him out just yet, he fears that he’s just as lost when it comes to Will and what he really is, underneath the endless performances.

”Goodnight then,” says Will and Hannibal lies still, trying to sleep but not quite drifting off. He hasn’t had a sleepless night in far too long, definitely never on a night where he slaughtered a pig, gave that part of himself the gift of a human life. He lies awake long enough that Will, in his sleep perhaps, moves and turns over, curling close.

He allows Will to curl around him and he closes his eyes and part of him wonders if this is just another part of the act and Will isn’t just as awake as he is.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your support, it makes my little writer heart grow <3

You can contact me on tumblr at sugarmaus and on twitter @ThisMouse.

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Beta by endellionaeternus / Endellion <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“You got home late last night.”

”And you sound like a nagging partner, Will. Remember your place.” Hannibal pours the hot water into the teapot, allowing the tea to infuse and inhaling the delicate scent. He looks up and sees Will watching him, studying him with narrowed eyes.

”Did you have fun wherever you were?” Will asks and while Hannibal’s first instinct is to anger or frustration, he holds himself back. Will is curious, curious about Hannibal. Will wanting to know about his life, about him; something about it makes him feel happy.

”Why do you wish to know?” Hannibal asks, not trying to hide the small smile on his lips particularly hard. He pours milk into the milk jug and places the jug on the silver tray along with the sugar and full teapot.

”I was just wondering,” says Will, his voice with a note of defensiveness that broadens Hannibal’s smile. Hannibal leans on the kitchen counter and looks at Will, looks at Will’s face as he stares back defiantly, trying to hide his own thoughts but failing.

”You’re interesting,” says Hannibal thoughtfully and as he says it, he knows what an understatement that is. Will shrugs and looks away.

”No, not really master, you’ll tire of me eventually.”

”But I find you interesting,” presses Hannibal and he sees the corner of Will’s mouth twitch in what might be a suppressed smile.

”Is that all that matters?” he asks and while Hannibal at first thinks it a stupid question, he gets caught for a moment in answering.

”No.” He’s found others interesting, equally and *more* in certain cases but then, it hasn't worked out, hadn’t gone the direction it needed to go. Hannibal knows he can sometimes be impulsive.

Will snorts a little then looks from the tray to Hannibal before sliding off the stool and picking up the tray, unprompted and unasked. He walks towards Hannibal’s study and Hannibal follows him, trailing in a way that makes him uncomfortable, as though he’d let Will lead him somewhere, anywhere.

That can never be and Hannibal makes sure to sit down swiftly, to shift it back to a master being served by his slave. He is not the plaything here. Will looks at him, something playing on his face that could go in any direction in any moment if only he'd allow his emotions to play out across his face. He pours the tea and he passes it to Hannibal with the smallest splash of milk, just enough so that the tea has become opaque and he remembers so well how Hannibal likes it, already.

"Tell me something then," says Will, picking up his own cup and avoiding Hannibal's gaze. "What about me is so interesting?"

"Do you ask because you want to know what to pretend at? So you know which parts of your act to refine?"

Will snorts. "Do you always answer every question with a question?"

"You're being very insolent, Will."

Will looks at him, *glares* at him and places the cup onto the saucer in his hand. "You haven't cared about me being insolent for weeks now, *Hannibal*."

The sound of his name in Will's mouth makes him feel conflicted, confused and angry and thrilled all at once. He purses his lips and narrows his eyes in both thought and to give Will the impression that perhaps he's contemplating a punishment.

It doesn't work, the warning of his look either going past Will or hitting him at just the angle so he doesn't *care*. Will smirks, thinking he's winning and perhaps he is. Every conversation a battle and Hannibal feels the need to win so very strongly in his core. He sits up straighter and sips at his tea and for a moment he thinks about smashing the cup on the floor to alleviate the desire to smash Will's *face* into the floor.

He takes a sip of tea and finds it tasteless and lukewarm already. He looks down into the cup of liquid and he can see the faint reflection of something in the surface. If the light were brighter, perhaps he'd be able to see his own face reflected back up at him. Instead he just sees shapeless things that he can't quite make sense of and it's just one more thing that's causing him confusion tonight.

Hannibal puts the cup down on the saucer, leans forward and places the saucer on the tray. He looks at Will and sees the way Will smiles and looks so smug and Hannibal knows he'll need to separate himself from Will if he doesn't wish to do something rash.

Hannibal stands and leaves, moving through the house to the kitchen, what used to be his sanctuary but now seems to wrapped up in thoughts and memories of Will. He hasn't had Will for that long and yet the slave is already so wrapped up and entwined with Hannibal's favourite things and places. He doesn't want to take Will with him and see if Will might enjoy killing in the way that Hannibal does. He might want companionship but should that companionship be Will?

Hannibal leans against the counter and takes a breath and wonders when things became so precarious. He is in control and he is the one who chose Will out from the hundreds of

options, he's the one who was drawn to him and yet he feels as though he's inadvertently handed over all his power to this slave. He looks up and sees Will standing in the doorway, the smug look gone and one of concern on his face, *faux* concern. Hannibal doesn't believe it for a moment, knowing deep down, simply *knowing* that Will doesn't feel anything right now, doesn't feel any of the things that Hannibal might want him to feel. He can't trust him and yet he raises his hand and beckons Will near and Will comes, the fool.

Will steps close and Hannibal wraps an arm around his back, drawing him close and he wants to hurt him and he wants to devour him and ravish him and he settles for a kiss but it's just not enough. He pulls back and sees Will looking up at him with the faintest crease of concern across his brow and the display just makes Hannibal feel angrier, more frustrated by the moment that he doesn't know what his slave is thinking. He pushes Will back, Will's hips hitting the countertop and it can't feel pleasant, in fact, it must be very uncomfortable but Will doesn't make a sound or protest when Hannibal kisses him again.

Hannibal's hand skitters out, searching for something without a conscious thought and he pulls back from the kiss to look past Will's head to where his fingers are seeking out the knife block. He breathes hard as he draws out his favourite chef's knife and he feels and hears Will's breaths against the side of his neck as he hears the sound of the knife drawing free.

The weight and heft of it in his hand has always felt comfortable and comforting. It has always felt right for him to hold the sharp blade and use it to slice the meats he loves to prepare so much. He's taken life with this knife before, several in fact, even though he doesn't kill at the house very often any more. It's too fraught with danger but a slave is different, it's easy to fill out the report and say whatever you want to say. They don't look into it, not that deeply, no one cares as long as you're willing to buy another and line the right pockets.

Hannibal looks into Will's eyes as he moves the knife into Will's view and he watches the way Will's eyes trace the shining edge of metal and he's not sure what reaction he wants to invoke but he knows he wants some reaction, some new and mysterious turn from Will, some new direction for their interactions. He turns the knife slightly so that the light changes and he watches Will's eyes slide closed and Will tilts his head back, exposing his neck and in the act of presenting himself, showing Hannibal where exactly he should cut, where he *can* cut, it feels far too much like being given permission. Hannibal doesn't need permission, doesn't need Will to grant him access to his life as he would give access to his body. Hannibal will take what he wants and when he wants and it is not Will's decision if and when that happens.

Hannibal feels his lip curl into a snarl and he's running on instinct when he leans close and bites at the skin of Will's neck with his teeth rather than with the edge of the knife blade. Will doesn't move or start at the feeling, doesn't react at all when Hannibal breaks skin enough to draw blood. He lets go and leans back and sees the slight well of blood from where he's left a bite mark and he waits for Will to open his eyes and *look* at him but he doesn't.

Hannibal is still holding the knife in his hand when he reaches his hands up and cups Will's face. The knife in his hand presses, flat side between palm and Will's head and Hannibal can feel how the metal has already warmed from his touch. He turns Will's head upward, adjusting the angle so Will's face is pointing right towards him and yet Will still holds his

eyes closed, face looking so serene and calm, like he's prepared himself already to go and Hannibal won't allow that, it's not Will's decision to make.

"Will," he says low and dangerous and Will still doesn't open his eyes so Hannibal repeats calling out to him, again and again, growing sharper and more urgent with each repetition. He squeezes his hands in against Will's head more and he feels warm and wet and realises he's cut the side of his own hand against the edge of his knife. He pulls his hand free and drops the knife, licking at the blood on his hand and he sees the blood on Will's head and he's not sure if it's his own or if perhaps he's cut Will too. He leans in and licks and tastes warm wet coppery blood and he's not got such a taste for it that he would seek it out and yet this time it tastes like heaven, like vital life and like *Will* and he's wondering why he ever felt the desire to slice Will's throat for anything other than the wet red life that would have spurted out.

He pulls back enough to look, properly look at Will, to see if he'll react, open his eyes and face what is happening. He can't hide forever, can't keep this pretend going on forever, can't keep playing at being something unnatural and boring as he does.

"Look at me," orders Hannibal and Will doesn't move. Hannibal slaps him, hard and sudden and Will's head twists to the side and Hannibal smiles when he sees his eyes finally open again. Will turns to face him, eyes clear and bright and full of mysteries and Hannibal licks his lips.

"Say something, plead, or fight back or *something*," Hannibal orders and he sees the corner of Will's mouth twitch into a smile. Will shakes his head and Hannibal bends, reaching and picking up the knife in his own still bleeding hand and he holds it where Will can see and raises his eyebrows.

"Are you going to do it?" asks Will and they both know what he's asking. Hannibal shrugs.

"That depends," he murmurs and brings the knife close to Will's neck, pressing the blade against Will's throat at just under the pressure needed to break the skin. He lines it up parallel to where Will's collar sits, just a few centimeters higher against Will's skin. Will holds so perfectly statue still and Hannibal swallows as he watches the faintest movements in Will's neck of his pulse throbbing.

He looks from Will's neck to his face, looking for each small variation and twitch, any tell tale sign but there are none. Will is still but is it fear or is it him behaving how he might expect Hannibal to desire? Does he hold steady so that Hannibal doesn't break the skin or is it so that Hannibal will have no resistance if he were to press just a little harder and *slice*.

Hannibal holds his breath as he draws the line of the blade, not hard, not *lethal* but so carefully measured that it takes all of his self control not to press just a little harder.

A line of blood wells up, not much, not enough to dribble down right away, not enough to make a *line* of blood. Hannibal wants to watch it spill and trail down Will's neck and run down under and over his collar and down his chest. Hannibal leans close and licks and he hears Will's faint hissed breath as he swipes his tongue against the shallow cut and he can't keep the smile off his face from Will's reaction and the taste of life in his mouth.

He uses the knife to cut the first button from Will's shirt, sliding it between the edges of the fabric and cutting the thread holding it on. It's destructive in such a delightful way and yet Hannibal knows the damage he does now can be repaired. Buttons can be sewn back on and skin can knit back together and he hasn't gone too far, not *yet*.

He bares Will's chest and traces the tip of the knife down the centre of Will's sternum. He presses over his the centre and he knows how much pressure would be needed to penetrate here. It would be stupid to try it, better to slide between the ribs to the side to target the heart. Hannibal knows how easy it is, once you get going, how satisfying, and while he *wants* to he also doesn't want to end this, not yet anyway.

He watches Will's chest moving, what had once been small slow breaths growing faster, chest moving more with each intake of air and it makes Hannibal's knife move slightly with each breath. He sees his own hand still bleeding, leaving a trail down the handle and he watches the drop that has accumulated at the base of the knife break free and fall.

He doesn't need to hold Will still, doesn't need to worry about him struggling and accidentally causing additional unplanned damage. Hannibal finds it irritating, as though Will is conspiring to rob him of some of the thrill of this. He looks up from where he traces the tip of the knife on the centre of Will's chest to his face.

Will is looking at him, watching him intently with an unreadable expression on his face. Hannibal narrows his eyes and forces himself to lift the knife away from Will's chest before he gives into instinct and *penetrates* with it.

"What do you want, Will?" he asks and he watches Will lick his lips and tilt his head slightly. Will looks at him from under his eyelashes and it's some sort of fake seduction and right then Hannibal *knows* that he's not going to get what he truly wants from Will, not now.

"Do it," whispers Will and Hannibal looks down at the knife in his hand and back up to Will's face.

"Do you really want that?" asks Hannibal and Will just smirks at him, his face taking on an ugliness in the expression of this moment.

"It's what you want, isn't it? It's what you always do, I'm not stupid."

"Far from it," says Hannibal softly, shuffling just a little closer, pressing his shirt up against the blood on Will's chest and no doubt leaving a stain as he hovers his own face inches from Will's. "I think you're smart, perhaps *too* smart, Will." He smiles as he leans close and licks across the corner of Will's mouth and nibbles along his jaw and up to his ear so he can whisper close and intimate. "You've figured out far too much about *me*."

"So say it, say it out loud," says Will, his voice sounding suddenly so *deafening* in the kitchen, echoing against so many solid surfaces. Hannibal leans back enough to look at him and he shakes his head. "And you think *I'm* the one who is hiding, *master*." He smiles, sweetly, fakely and flutters his lashes. "If you kill me now, how many will that be? Have you lost count?"

”I’ll answer if you will answer one simple question for me,” offers Hannibal and he sees Will look to the side, thinking, *considering* and he holds his breath, waiting for what he’s wanted to know this entire time and finally he sees Will sigh, shrugging and looking back to stare him right in the eye.

”I’ve always been very good at reading people, it’s been a problem all my life. It’s a power, kept me alive but it’s…*hard* to deal with.”

”Just reading people?” asks Hannibal, keeping them pressed close but dropping the knife on the counter with the metallic sound of metal against marble and he sees Will flinch slightly at the noise.

”Call it empathy. It’s easy to please people, keep yourself alive when you can tell what they’re thinking.” Hannibal smiles, a little fondly, and he sees Will’s mouth turn up into a smile right back. “But I never get to be myself, not the real me. If a slave wants to survive, they have to become what others desire.”

”I don’t want an act,” whispers Hannibal and he cups Will’s face with his hand and notices the blood along his wrist from where the cut on his hand has continued to pump. “I want the real you, Will. Tell me, what do you really want?”

Will looks to the side then, avoiding his gaze or thinking but Hannibal can’t quite be sure which it is and Will smiles then, biting his lip momentarily before looking back at him.

”The next time you go out, the next time...take me with you.”

”Do you know what I do when I go out, late at night?” Hannibal asks and he watches Will smile and nod at him and Hannibal narrows his own eyes and searches for the edges of Will’s act, the signs that this is all just another ploy to trick him into something, whatever it is that Will is really truly after.

”If you’re trying to play a game, you’ll lose. I’ll take as much joy in ending your life as any other, more in fact.” It’s a warning rather than a threat and he thinks Will takes it as it’s meant, if the way his smile barely falters is anything to go by.

Hannibal sets the knife down on the counter beside Will and steps back, opening up the space between them. They’ve been so close together, so tight and pressing and touching that it’s as though the world rushes into the extra three feet of space. He takes a breath, and another, deep and calming and he looks at the blood drips down Will’s chest, drying and clotting and he’s not sure if what he feels is guilt for the pain or desire to do it again.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your feedback and support <3

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Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

> Sorry for the late post, completely forgot to post last night! Feel free to poke me on twitter if I'm late again XD
>
> Beta by endellionaeternus / Endellion <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will seems oddly *affectionate*. It's the act returning, Will pretending to be a perfect little slave and while Hannibal sees right through it, he doesn't order Will to stop. Perhaps he should, he's bored of little sluts who writhe and moan and pretend they would like nothing better than his cock inside them and Hannibal doesn't care for something as mundane as that, not when whatever Will teases at being is so much more.

He's promised something to both Will and himself and while he searches for a perfect candidate, he discards each for a different reason. He wants a test, a real test of Will and he doesn't want any doubt when he puts Will on the spot with a knife in his hand and a pig in front of him. Will knows how to slice a throat, knows how to make the usual type of pig bleed out. Hannibal doesn't want hesitation but at the same time he thinks he's not too sure what he wants. Perhaps he might be disappointed if Will had no hesitation at all.

Perhaps he's disappointed, perhaps the thought that Will has already taken a life and Hannibal *missed it* is the frustrating part. Perhaps the thought that he still doesn't quite understand Will, the unspoken worry inside that when it comes down to it, he's the one who needs this more than Will does.

It's uncomfortable now, more so than it has been before, as this time it's not just his own worries invading the air between them. They both know that something is going on and while surely Will *knew* before, he's not bothering to hide anything now.

At least, Hannibal would like to think that Will isn't hiding. He'd like to think that he's seeing the real Will but he knows it's not; he's not sure if he'll ever see something genuine and real and affirming and it calls not just Will into question but all his other acquisitions over the years.

Hannibal wakes early and despite snapping right into consciousness as usual, he lingers. He lies still and he listens to Will's breathing and perhaps in another time and another moment he would enjoy the feeling of Will pressed close against him, breathing softly. It's quiet and still and it should be comfortable and calming but it's not. It's a hundred new questions and Hannibal stares up at the ceiling and listens.

He hears the change in Will's breathing as he reaches consciousness and he feels Will's fingers run through the hair on his chest in mindless circles and he sighs without thinking. Will stills and he hears Will's voice and feels the slight movement of his jaw against where his face is pressed against him. "How long are you planning to wait?"

"I don't know," Hannibal admits and it's never easy to admit these things but, with Will, it's not all that difficult.

"Can't wait forever," he hears Will's voice say and he stares at the ceiling and silently agrees.

"You seem willing to."

"I don't have a choice."

Hannibal sighs then, loud enough that he feels Will pull his head away from his chest and sees his face lean into his field of vision. Will looks at him, thoughtful, and he sits up and Hannibal lies still, watching.

He doesn't move as Will moves, leaning and shifting as he grabs for the lube kept beside the bed and swings his leg over Hannibal's body. He doesn't feel aroused but Will reaches back and slicks his cock and he didn't even realise that he'd gotten hard so quickly but then Will is rocking back and riding him and this should feel good but it just feels like a blur.

He doesn't hold Will's hips, doesn't guide things, just watches Will's face. Will looks so intent, working on him, moving with such purpose with each roll of his hips. Hannibal doesn't want this, not really. He wants to say something and yet he can't seem to form the words and he watches Will move and feels violated in a way he can't quite articulate.

It's just his body responding, an inevitable reaction to what Will is doing to him. It's an orgasm, a release but it doesn't seem to release much of the tension. He's too sensitive and he watches as Will jerks his own dick, making a low noise when he comes, spurting onto Hannibal's chest. He looks down at himself, at where Will has left his mark and it doesn't feel right.

"Why did you do that?" asks Hannibal softly and Will smiles at him, lifting himself off Hannibal and lying down next to him. Hannibal turns his head and looks at Will.

Will props his head on one hand and looks down at him. "Did it make you feel any better?"

"What made you think I needed you to make me feel better?" He can't hide the sarcasm in his tone but Will doesn't seem to mind. He's *smiling* and the sight of it makes Hannibal want to break his neck. It would be easy but first he'd need to switch their positions. Will looking down at him like this just doesn't feel right.

"How many people have you killed?" Will asks the question he's asked before and perhaps it's the way his mind is drifting but Hannibal feels inclined to answer.

"Dozens, and you?"

Will doesn't respond immediately. Perhaps thinking Hannibal's question stupid when he knows about Hobbs already. Perhaps Hannibal is imagining things, misremembering something that never happened because something about Will makes him wish to know the truth about how many lives Will has taken. "Why do you do it?"

"Do I need a reason?"

"No, I suppose not." Will lies down next to him and they stay there, side by side, both looking at the ceiling.

"Why did you kill Hobbs?"

"Because he was going to rape me and then he'd do it again, maybe even kill me."

"Is that the real reason?" Hannibal stares at the ceiling and keeps finding patterns that he never really thought of in each little swirl of the plaster.

"You can believe whatever you want to believe Hannibal, nothing I say will change your mind." He hears Will sigh and feels him shift a little. He's aware of each little movement and feeling, the movement of air against his skin and the tight itchiness in his skin where Will's semen has started to dry. "Maybe I liked it, and I want to see if it was…I want to try it again." Hannibal feels as though his heart has stopped and he can barely breathe.

"We can...go out, tonight. If...that's what you want, Will."

"Okay," whispers Will and after all this time, perhaps this is what he was looking for. It wasn't just to seek out someone interesting to distract and entertain for a while, it wasn't just about a distraction from the numb boring reality that is his life. It was about finding someone to share this with, properly and not as a tool to play with minds. It's fun to make someone kill who doesn't wish to, it's fun to try and craft someone into something they're not but if Will is truly capable of this….

Perhaps Will could be his equal, despite their very different standings and Hannibal can't keep the smile from his lips at the thought. "Do you have a preference?" asks Hannibal and he feels Will shift and sees him come into view again, looking down at him with a slightly confused expression.

"I prefer to kill the useless rude dregs of society," says Hannibal, feeling almost proud in the explanation.

"Making the world a better place?" asks Will but his tone suggests that he doesn't think that's what Hannibal is doing at all. Perhaps Will still has too much empathy, perhaps he always will and this won't work. But the thought is still there, the possibility and Hannibal can't seem to shrug it off.

"Is there someone *special* Will? Someone who is deserving of death?"

"Does anyone deserve it?" asks Will and Hannibal laughs, he can't seem to help himself.

"Someone who made you angry then, someone who is undeserving of living any longer."

Will snorts. “You must find it very easy, if you hate so much. I’ve only ever hated two people strongly enough to truly wish to kill them by my own hand.”

”Who?” asks Hannibal but Will is already answering, looking away as he answers.

”Hobbs is already dead, I got him didn’t I?” He looks back down at Hannibal and smiles faintly. “And my father is already dead.”

Hannibal looks past Will, thinking, pondering on options. “Perhaps you need to learn how to hate more thoroughly if *I* haven’t made your list.” Then again, if he had, Hannibal knows that Will could never admit that.

”An alternative then,” Will says softly. “One I wished dead in some manner, there are several to choose from.” He looks to the side, pondering and smiles faintly as he opens his mouth again. “A master then, he wasn’t as cruel as some of the others but his cruelty was a special kind of sadistic.”

”You’ve truly *hated* masters before.”

”Of course, I’d hazard to say that every slave has felt that level of rage at some time or another.”

”And you’ll admit it out loud.”

Will smiles and shrugs. “It’s funny that your thoughts didn’t immediately jump to yourself. Perhaps it’s you I want dead.” Will stares him down and perhaps it should make him feel uncomfortable but Hannibal just smiles. He reaches a hand up and strokes Will’s cheek.

”If you were capable of it, I would welcome it, Will. Perhaps we should move a step at a time though.”

Will rolls his eyes and moves his face away from Hannibal’s hand and Hannibal lets him go. He drops his own hand back onto the surface of the bed and he watches Will nibble at his own lip in thought.

”So who was this previous owner, the one you’d like us to kill? I have access to your ownership record, I can work it out if you won’t tell me.”

”Maybe I don’t want to kill him with you, maybe I’d prefer to save him for later.”

”There you go Will, still thinking you have a choice.”

Will smiles then and leans close to Hannibal. “I do, I can decide if I want to participate now, that’s what you want, isn’t it?” Hannibal realises, perhaps far too late, that Will somehow seems to have worked him out. Will knows his secrets, has seen his vulnerable parts and Hannibal might own Will but Will has taken ownership of something far more valuable to Hannibal than Will’s life might be.

”Aren’t you worried I’ll get bored of you, Will?” It’s the only threat he really has left and while it’s still there, if Will doesn’t truly believe it, if he doesn’t fear it, then it’s useless to

Hannibal.

”The broker you met at the slave house, the one who showed you in when we met. He shouldn’t be too difficult for you to get your hands on.” Will sits up and turns away, suddenly seeming so busy and distracted by pulling himself out of the bed.

”He was rather rude,” says Hannibal, cautiously and he waits for Will to say more.

Will doesn’t respond further, just gets up and heads around the bed and disappears into the bathroom. Hannibal sighs, frustration and something else all at once, and then he pulls himself out of bed, forcing his body to move.

He joins Will in the shower and he picks up the sponge and starts to wash Will’s back and shoulders. It’s not usual, for a master to bathe his slave but Hannibal wants to do this and it doesn’t seem much harm, when things between them are so tenuous. Will has gone still, leaning against the shower wall as Hannibal scrubs at his back. He still has fading bruises and other marks that can never fade and it’s a pattern that tells only part of Will’s story.

He stops his ministrations and pours shampoo into his hand before beginning to lather Will’s hair. Will’s hair has already grown long enough to curl, just a little, at the ends. Hannibal finds it appealing in a way he can’t describe. He’s attracted to many things in many people and yet something about Will’s whole package has grown on him more and more as their time together has gone on.

”Does it matter to you that he deserves to die?” asks Will, his voice raised above the sound of the running water and echoing in the enclosed space. Hannibal pauses and he feels Will’s head shift under his fingers as Will tips it back, into the falling water.

He watches as Will lets the water rinse off the lather and he watches the way Will’s back arches as he turns his head this way and that to get rid of the soap. Will turns to look over his shoulder at him and the drops of water cling to his face, dripping everywhere and his hair, wet now, plastered to his skull and in all the times Hannibal has seen him, this is when it feels as though Will might be at his most vulnerable.

”Does it matter?” asks Will again and he sounds so desperate now that Hannibal pauses and looks at Will again, properly, focusing on his eyes now and noting the way the water clings to his lashes and he shakes his head.

”Not to me, but if you need a reason to do it, I can accept that.”

Will swallows, noticeably. “Okay, him then. He deserves it.”

”Why does he deserve it?” asks Hannibal, his curiosity getting the better of him and Will shrugs.

”Thought it didn’t matter.”

”Humour me,” says Hannibal as he reaches past Will for more shampoo and shuffles past Will to swap places with him under the spray. He starts to lather his own hair and he allows

Will the time to think.

”He liked to touch the slaves, didn’t have much interest in *me*, he liked the younger female slaves. I...I saw him touching them.”

”Slaves don’t have the right to their own bodies.” Hannibal states the fact more to see what Will might think of the sentiment than anything else. He watches how Will’s head jerks at the words and Hannibal ducks away from the glare he receives by facing the shower spray to rinse his hair.

”Well he didn’t own them and, even if he did, that...it wasn’t right.”

”So you’re to be a righteous killer then, Will.” Hannibal smiles at the thought and he finds the idea amusing. How delightfully naive it is and when he looks back at Will, he’s frowning but he doesn’t speak any more, doesn’t have a rebuke to the comment.

They finish up with just the sounds of running water to fill the room. They rinse off and Will hands Hannibal a towel before taking another for himself and Hannibal dries his hair while he watches Will dry his body.

”I’ll bring you the broker, the one who showed you to me. And while I should perhaps be pleased that he showed me *you*, I will bring him for you.”

”Thank you Master,” says Will softly. He sounds like he actually means it this time and that’s something Hannibal could get used to hearing.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your feedback and support <3

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Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Beta by endellionaeternus / Endellion <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal does his research. It takes two weeks to plan it out and he can't decide if it took this long because he's delaying things or if it was so quick because he wanted to move things along with Will.

It wasn't easy. The man has a wife and child but he doesn't leave work until late. Hannibal checks the area carefully on several subtle nights of reconnaissance after work and finds the spots in the car park without security camera coverage. It's possible, it's going to happen, and he already has an idea of when it will be. He comes home late each night and Will seems anxious about it. Is he worried about the impending test or is it some kind of nervous excitement?

Hannibal fears one and hopes for the other but which it is to be, he keeps changing his own mind on. Part of him wants Will to take to this, to find the thrill as exciting as Hannibal does. He wants someone to share this with and yet at the same time, if it is not to be Will, he doesn't know that he'll enjoy killing Will as much as he did the others. The others were weak, they weren't worth his time, they were easy and fun to kill. Will is the closest he's come and killing him will just feel like another step backwards.

Hannibal prepares things as much as he can and, even as the week goes by and Will's behaviour goes back to being so carefully measured and suspicious, Hannibal doesn't want to rush this, he can't make himself rush it. This needs to be perfect and Hannibal won't settle for anything less than that.

It's a Wednesday night when he makes his move. He doesn't have any early appointments on Thursday, he's made his arrangements weeks ahead of time to avoid any suspicion but he's been careful enough that there will be none. He is ready and smooth and despite the nervousness that he hasn't felt in years creeping back in; the abduction is perfect, clean, and quiet, exactly as Hannibal prefers these things to go.

Hannibal pulls into the garage that he rarely uses, preferring to park on the street but this is different. He can't have the neighbours see, he needs to keep up appearances. He sits in the car and listens to the muffled noises from the trunk of the car and he rolls his eyes at the pathetic creature struggling as he gets up and moves into the house.

Will is waiting for him, in the kitchen and he's been waiting for Hannibal each night since they've made this agreement but he must know that *this* is the night. Hannibal can sense that

Will *knows* and he smiles at him. Will doesn't return it but he nods, his face looking slightly drawn and Hannibal feels that twist in his stomach.

He's done this with other slaves, the ones who got this far and without fail, they've all been a disappointment. He doesn't want Will to fail, perhaps more than he's ever wanted any of the others to succeed before. This feels different, as though the stakes are higher and this means *more* to him, to Will. It's something to both of them, something they can share, together. "He's in the car, help me," says Hannibal calmly, the first words spoken and Will nods and follows him out.

He's not that heavy but he's awkward as he struggles and wriggles. As a young man, Hannibal had been in the habit of knocking them unconscious or at least *trying* to but it only takes doing it slightly wrong to end the evening on a sour note. It's less fun to kill them when they're not conscious and you're unable to rouse them.

He holds the man under the armpits and Will holds his bound legs and they carry him through the house, through the pantry and finally, to the door at the back that Will knows he's not to enter.

It's cooler as they move down the stairs, which is good because Hannibal can feel the prickle of sweat along the back of his neck. Thankfully the pig goes still for a few minutes, still trembling and shaking but perhaps exhausted enough to stop struggling quite so violently. Will looks at Hannibal for guidance and Hannibal indicates the way with a nod of his head.

They pause to flip the lights along the way and the room down here is illuminated. Will looks around with wide eyes and Hannibal is torn between watching him closely for each little tell, each little sign of fear or hesitation and making sure this goes smoothly, of enjoying this for his own purposes.

They reach the metal autopsy table and they lift their charge with twin grunts of strain onto the cold metal. The struggle begins anew and Hannibal rolls his eyes and for the first time, Will smiles at him. There's a flutter of something in Hannibal's chest that feels like *hope* and he knows how dangerous this part is. This is the exact moment that none of the others have gotten past. He's managed to get them to pick up the knife and plunge it in, he's gotten them to *do* it but it never really felt like it was them doing it, only the result of Hannibal's manipulations. Hannibal *likes* manipulating people but he wants more than that, needs more than that, and perhaps this will be where Will comes in.

"How do you want to do it?" Asks Hannibal, moving around the room to pick up a fresh disposable apron. He hands it to Will and Will takes it, eyes never leaving the broker on the table. The broker screams through the duct tape and Hannibal rolls his eyes at the sound. He leans down, eye to eye with the stupid man and grins at him. "All that screaming is pointless, you're just making it worse for yourself if you give me a headache." Surprisingly, he goes quiet, startled and staring up like a frightened rabbit and if Hannibal was a little softer, perhaps he'd feel sorry for the stupid creature, thinking that there's actually a chance that he could escape with his life.

He steps back to watch, the man lying prone and helpless and Will pacing back and forth. Hannibal has laid out a few options but he’s hoping for the knife. He wants Will to slice his

throat like he used to do with the pigs.

”How did you kill Hobbs?” asks Hannibal and the fool on the table lets out a high pitched noise from behind the tape. Hannibal steps closer, leaning on the edge of the table and he glares down at his victim, *their* victim.

”Stabbed him in the gut.” Will states it plainly and Hannibal watches him walk over to the table and run his fingers across the selection. A hammer, a knife, a wire and a few others, all clean and ready for use and Hannibal holds his breath as he watches Will run his fingers along the knife handle.

”Is there a particular reason you chose that method, Will?”

He watches as Will shrugs, his back to Hannibal and he picks up the knife in his hand, testing the weight. “I was defending myself.” He says quietly and he turns and smiles at Hannibal but it doesn’t reach his eyes. “I did what I had to do.”

”And now?” asks Hannibal and he hates himself for needing to know. What if he jeopardises this? He doesn’t want to make Will second guess this decision, doesn’t want Will to hesitate so he forces himself to back away, still close enough to see but far enough back to resist the temptation to grab Will’s arm and force him to plunge in the blade.

Whatever could be, what might happen and all of the possibilities in this moment are so beautiful. It feels like it goes on for a painfully long time and when Hannibal will think back over it, he'll find each moment, each detail, indelibly marked into his memory. He watches the way the knife glints in Will's hand and he sees Will move closer, slowly but it's not hesitation. Hannibal can't even quite tell how quickly things are truly happening as he moves, the time things are taking too difficult to judge, and he watches with bated breath as Will moves close.

Will doesn't get right to it right away, not the way Hannibal would have if it were him but at the same time he wants Will to be himself, wants to see the real and genuine version of Will, the version that's capable of killing and for the first time, perhaps, this one won't feel like a mere slave that Hannibal had to *force* into it.

Will picks at the tape and starts to peel it off and the pig on the table holds still as Will uncovers his mouth only to start babbling as soon as his lips are free.

"Please, please you don't have to do this, I have a son, please, please." He sounds so pathetic and desperate and perhaps this is exactly the kill for Will to have, Hannibal would gladly kill the odious little creature himself and he watches as Will looks down at his future victim dispassionately.

Will looks poised, ready, and Hannibal must consciously stop his feet from moving and carrying him forward, closer. He wants to share in this but he knows that if this goes right, if it *works* that there will be plenty of other lives to share between them. He bites his lip and stays back and he watches as Will waits for the pleading to die down. It takes some minutes but eventually the man is crying and a bit quieter now that he sees he'll get no verbal response.

Will looks at the knife in his hand and he holds it up where the man on the table can see. The man holds still, following the blade with big open terrified eyes. Will has an odd blankness to his expression and Hannibal can't tell if he's hiding and if he is, *what* exactly he might be hiding. He wants to reassure Will, tell him that it's okay for him to take pleasure in this, to enjoy it. In this, Will elevates himself to a level far beyond this stupid pig's comprehension and Hannibal smiles in the knowledge that he gets to witness this.

Will brings the knife to just under the man's chin, pressing the blade up and they both hear his strangled gasp, how he holds so perfectly still, chest unmoving as he holds his breath and does he know, truly *know* that his life is going to end or does he still cling to pathetic hope that either of them could ever change their minds. Will looks up at Hannibal and they look at each other from across the body of the man and the space in the room and as far apart as they are, Hannibal knows that this is something that could do nothing else but bring them closer together.

"Why do you want me to do this?" asks Will in a hushed voice and the man on the table whimpers again and Will presses the knife a little firmer, quieting him once more.

"I don't," says Hannibal. "I merely want you to want it." He smiles then and he watches how Will narrows his eyes at him. Hannibal can't resist the pull then, stepping close and up against the other side of the metal table so that they can properly face each other. "Do you want this Will?"

Will glances down at the knife in his hand and where it has started to lightly bite into the man's neck and he looks up at Hannibal again and nods. "He deserves to die," says Will and suddenly his arm is moving and it's so graceful and perfect. Will has done this to a thousand pigs, he's sliced a thousand necks, and yet, when he flicks the knife and the arterial spray arches up, it's so beautiful. Perhaps it was intentional or perhaps not, but the spray catches them both, Hannibal mostly, on the far side of the slice as he was. They both look down and listen to the gurgling gasping rattling dying attempting breaths of their prey. He bleeds out quickly but it's messy and Hannibal thinks it would be fun to have the next one hung up, much like the pigs at the slaughterhouse. He could drain and hang the meat that way, age it properly. He'll make a proper meal for his Will and he smiles at Will and notices how Will stares down at his second victim.

Will doesn't look anything like the others. They had been at turns terrified and angry. The terror at what they had done and the anger at Hannibal, for *making* them do it and yet here is Will, looking in *awe* at the sight before him and the thought that Will likes this, that he's enjoyed it makes Hannibal's heart leap in his chest and he thinks it might be the most beautiful thing he's ever seen in his life. He moves around the table and steps close and he touches at the blood that's sprayed it's way up Will's neck and he leans down and kisses Will's cheek and something about the movement must snap Will out of whatever thoughts he's lost in because he turns immediately.

Hannibal isn't quite sure of the chain of events, isn't sure how it happened but suddenly Will is the one kissing *him* and it's Will the aggressor, pressing him back against the edge of the table and Hannibal can hear the wet sound of blood against fabric as they move and Will is

clawing at him, suddenly an insatiable animal and sex and death and blood all rolling together and Hannibal can't tell where one ends and the next begins.

Death has always been this fundamental thing, part of the fabric of Hannibal's reality. It's so wrapped up in the other physical pleasures that it makes sense now, makes sense that this should turn so sexual, that the connection with Will should feel so *right* in this moment.

They're not having sex, not in the way that Hannibal is familiar with, when it comes to Will. They're doing something sexual and there's skin and lips and tongue and teeth and pressure and friction. There's the smell of blood in the room, the heat in the room overwhelming in a way it hadn't been when Will had done it.

Will is pressing him back against the table and Hannibal's elbow is leaning on the soft body, not yet stiffening up and still so wet with blood, still *warm*. Will is pressing him back and somehow he feels so big and aggressive and it is not the Will that Hannibal knows but it's an exciting creature, a *new* creature, one that Hannibal wants to know intimately.

Will pulls his lips away and they're breathing hard and Hannibal looks down and sees Will smirk at him. He sees the blade still in Will's hand and Will holds it up, dark red in this light, shining wet and sharp and it looks beautiful, in Will's blood covered hand and Will's face looks beautiful too, bruised and flecked with red arterial spray and smirking and intelligent. Hannibal wants him badly but he holds still, breathing, waiting.

"Why?" asks Will, and suddenly the smirk on his face doesn't seem quite so happy, quite so delighted as Hannibal had hoped. There's tension there, a twitch at the edge of Will's lips and a wrinkle between his eyebrows. He looks so tired, so *worried* and Hannibal feels the joy he'd felt a moment ago slip away from him, just a bit.

"It's beautiful, it's different isn't it? To the slave you killed?"

Will bites his lip and Hannibal straightens, lifting the weight from his elbow and trying to move away from the table a bit. Will presses a palm against his chest and Hannibal stills. He's not scared of Will, not worried he'll brandish the blade against him. Even if he did, what good could it do?

"His life is worth more, was worth more," whispers Will and Hannibal can't seem to read him, can't tell how he's feeling.

"What you did was a beautiful act Will, you held the ultimate power over him."

Will looks up at him and Hannibal sees Will's eyes flick between Hannibal's face and the knife in his hand. The hand holding the knife drops to his side and Hannibal hears the sound of metal hitting the floor.

Will takes a breath, slow and deep and he closes his eyes for a moment before looking up at Hannibal. "It was beautiful, you showed me that." It's what Hannibal wants to hear, he thinks, it might have been and all at once he's not sure again. He frowns and he notes how Will looks away again, turning his face to look at the body behind Hannibal.

”He deserved to die,” offers Hannibal and it’s not the reason that Hannibal wanted him dead but perhaps it will be enough for Will. Will smiles, though it doesn’t reach his eyes. He nods, but it doesn’t seem as enthusiastic as Hannibal might like.

”You don’t need a reason,” whispers Will. He looks back at Hannibal, looks him right in the eye and Hannibal’s breath catches at the sudden clarity between them. There’s no barrier, at least not one he can sense, so when Will presses closer and looks up at him and speaks, Hannibal feels like it’s *real*. “You don’t, but *I* do. He did deserve to die, and I get that you wanted me to do it but...I didn’t enjoy it.” He knows the last part is a lie, he *needs* it to be a lie and Will needs it to be true and Hannibal reaches up and cups Will’s cheek and smiles at him fondly because Will has done so *well*, has come so far. This is something Hannibal can work with, he can keep going, can bridge the rest of this gap and perhaps this means that his search can finally end, at least for a while, at least until Will disappoints him. He hasn’t disappointed so far, he’s perfect and Hannibal leans down and kisses the top of his head and draws Will close, hugging him.

”This is something special, I am glad I was here to witness it.” Will doesn’t say anything in response to the words but Hannibal feels Will’s fingers dig just a little sharper into his arms and he holds him just a little closer.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your feedback and support, this fic has been a wild ride so far huh? ;)

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Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

Beta by endellionaeternus / Endellion <3

See the end of the chapter for more notes

”Slice the meat against the grain like this.” Hannibal wields the knife and expertly slices. He moves deliberately slowly so that Will can follow his movements. “Makes for a tender bite.”

Hannibal moves aside, pressing the handle of the blade into Will’s open hand. The movement recalls the moment that a similar blade had been in Will’s open hand before, the time he killed the meal they are about to enjoy.

Will repeats Hannibal’s movements, preparing the pieces of meat to be dredged in flour and browned. Hannibal thinks that stewing the meat is a suitable fate for the creature this was before. He was not young and tender, his flesh is suited only to this but he can still make a satisfying meal for them both.

Will has been quiet since it happened. He follows direction and seems amenable enough to Hannibal’s requests but his thoughts seem elsewhere. Hannibal only hopes that he might be processing this, coming to understand this new part of himself that they have uncovered together. He watches the colour of the meat changing as the heat starts to affect it. He turns to Will. “The maillard reaction, the reason the meat changes colour like this, makes it tastier.” Will nods but doesn’t speak and Hannibal feels a slight disappointment at that.

”Did it feel different to kill a freeman?” Hannibal asks and it’s a question he did want to ask eventually but not necessarily so soon. His desire to see Will engage, to move things on after so long without a case this successful, spurs him to this sloppiness and yet he can’t regret it when Will looks up at him and *smiles*.

”I don’t know if it can be explained, to you,” says Will and the words should sound like insubordination coming from a slave’s mouth but something between them *has* changed and shifted things just the slightest bit out of sync for Will to get away with it. “There’s a consequence, a serious one. A slave who kills another slave might be punished for taking away a possession that wasn’t theirs to destroy. A freeman is a human life, it’s something…” Will hesitates and bites his lip, looking at Hannibal’s face and Hannibal feels a flutter in his gut of nervousness. “...sacred.” Will finishes and Hannibal sighs and smiles fondly and he cups Will’s cheek. He leaves a streak of flour on Will’s face and he realises that he didn’t wipe his hand thoroughly enough. He forces his gaze away from Will’s face and he turns and washes his hands and he can’t help but smile to himself, back to Will and free to let the joy he feels show on his face for just a fleeting moment before he hides it again.

”So you agree then?” asks Will and Hannibal turns back, face neutral and he quirks an eyebrow and he watches as Will smiles, *smirks* at him. “The slave I killed meant nothing, all that mattered was the freeman. It doesn’t matter even though that was the one I chose to kill.”

Hannibal frowns and he watches Will turn back to their dish, removing the pan from the heat and focusing instead on the pot holding the rest of the ingredients. “You’re not going to claim self defence any longer?” asks Hannibal. His curiosity has gotten the better of him and for a moment he doesn’t care about their roles, about what he wishes them to be and what they truly are and what any of what they’ve been creating means. He just wants to understand, to know.

”He attacked me, I didn’t have a choice,” Will says in a voice so low that if the pan had continued to sizzle loudly, Hannibal might not have heard him. “When your master orders you to do something, you don’t have a choice *but* to do as they say.” Hannibal clenches his jaw and he tells himself that Will is lying but perhaps it’s just denial that fuels it. He can’t deny how much the words, the sentiment of them affects him.

”You wouldn’t have done that if I hadn’t ordered you to do it?” He doesn’t want to know the answer and yet Will turns and looks at him and *smiles* .

”No matter what I say, you won’t know if I’m just telling my master what he wants to hear or not. The burden of being a slave is vast, *endless*.” Will steps close, bringing a hand up to Hannibal’s hip and pulling him closer in a gesture that no slave should ever make. It feels too intimate, like the movements a lover might make, not a possession. “At least I can let you know what it means to never know what the other person truly wants from you, what they’re truly giving.” Will smiles and leans close and he kisses Hannibal but Hannibal doesn’t dare move a muscle. He doesn’t kiss back as Will moves his lips against his own and when Will draws back and then rocks up on his toes to lean closer to Hannibal’s ear, Hannibal is unmoving. Will’s voice is low, as though he’s sharing a secret that no one else should hear even though no other living soul is in this whole house, not now. “I just want to let you have what you want, if you’d only told me from the start, I could have offered it all.”

Hannibal frowns as he watches Will step back and return to cooking as though nothing had just happened. “I don’t want a game, an act, from you Will. That’s all I ever wanted from this.” It feels vulnerable to say it, to be so honest and he regrets speaking the moment the words leave his lips. Will doesn’t look up but he nods as he stirs the contents of the pot and Hannibal is forced to close his eyes for a moment, to clear his head and try and recentre his thoughts, for what it is worth.

They cook in silence bar the occasional spoken instruction from Hannibal to Will. Hannibal forces down each impulsive desire that rears it’s head. He doesn’t hit Will, doesn’t slap him, doesn’t pick up the knife and gut him. He doesn’t bend him across the counter and use him until they’re both in pain, Will more so in the visual fantasy that forces itself into his head. He doesn’t force Will’s head back and cut out his tongue or gouge out those knowing eyes from his head, doesn’t slice the pieces off of him that he wants to. He doesn’t even send him away, upstairs and out of sight, even if that would be the correct course of action, the sensible one.

They eat together, too much like equals and yet Hannibal can't do anything but look on Will this way, his vicious little tactical creature, cleverer than he seems and Hannibal might hate to look at his face but when he does, he can feel a sense of pride for picking out this particular slave and playing this game with him.

The meal does not taste as good as he had hoped it would. The meat of Will's kill should have tasted wonderful, *special* somehow and yet, it all feels ordinary. Will seems to hesitate over each bite and Hannibal wonders if it is because he truly knows what has gone into this meal, now that he knows exactly where the meat has come from. Will now knows the feeling of killing one's own food.

Things feel different in such wonderful ways and yet Hannibal can't help but be disappointed. Things have not lined up exactly with any of the fantasies he's had of this moment. Over the years he has tried this with others, he had imagined what this would be like, how it would feel and it's not like any of it. It feels frightening and frustrating and Hannibal is not used to either. He does not like the hold that Will seems to be growing over him. It's not right for a slave to hold this kind of power.

When they finish and clear their plates, Hannibal pauses for a moment, watching and waiting and trying to decide. In the end he withdraws to his office and closes the door to hide away, to show Will that he wishes for privacy. He could read, could write, could draw or do any of a hundred things to pass the time and yet he sits in silence and tries to think his way out of things.

There is no special way to fix things. There is no obvious method that he can see that will make Will cooperate in the way that Hannibal wants him to. Ultimately, if Will did suddenly cooperate, did play along, it wouldn't be right. Hannibal doesn't want a slave playing a part, he wants an equal, someone who he can share these dark pieces of himself and perhaps that is impossible. He's been chasing a dream, one that could never truly become reality.

It's late by the time Hannibal grows tired, exhausted from thinking over the same scenarios and problems with no solution. He shakes his head and yet can't seem to clear the mental image of Will's face when he killed. He's not even sure which aspects of the situation were reality and which were what he himself wished to see. He's not even sure if the parts he thought were real were that at all. Perhaps they were merely what Will wished him to see of things.

He goes to his bedroom and he's startled by the sight of the body in his bed, Will's bare shoulder peeking out from the sheets and Hannibal pauses in the doorway. He feels anger, rage, the kind that has driven him to impulsive actions before. He closes his eyes and draws a deep breath, then another. It helps but he still doesn't want to see Will when he opens his eyes.

It is no dream. He slips free from his clothing and he moves as silently as he can across the room, padding silently on bare feet against the coolness of wood. He barely breathes as he slides open a gap and slips under the sheets.

Will makes a sound, a sleepy grunt and he turns slightly, shifting but his breathing settles again. If he is awake, he is not showing it. Hannibal curls on his side and looks at the back of

Will's head and thinks it might be easy to reach forward. There are so many ways to kill a man with bare hands and yet he knows the moment of exhilaration would not be worth it in *this* particular case. He settles and closes his eyes, tries to sleep but he can't, not yet.

He hates himself for it but but not as much as he hates *Will* right now. He reaches his arm across the space and tucks himself against Will's back, pulls Will to meet him, presses skin against skin, the warmth of a living body, the warmth of *Will*, still living and breathing and *alive*. Sleep comes then, quietly creeping up on him as he settles with this slave in his arms, this man, his Will.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your feedback and support, I wanted to create something a bit new and different so i can only hope I succeeded even a little.

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Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

Apologies for the delay for this chapter! I've had a hectic week. Feel free to poke me on twitter if I'm this late again!

As always thank you to endellionaeternus / Endellion for the beta!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal can feel the eyes on him before he even wakes. He feels that prickle across the back of his neck, the feeling of being watched, the knowledge that he's being observed. He opens his eyes, slowly focusing on Will's face and Will is unreadable. From one angle the fondness of a lover's gaze and another, the thoughts of an enemy. Hannibal can't tell what he's thinking and what at first has seemed so delightful and unpredictable is at once unsettling in that exact same unpredictability.

"Good morning Will," he says, soft, careful. He shouldn't feel anxious, shouldn't feel this way at all. *Will* is the slave, Will is the one without power here and yet this does not feel right, not at all.Will bites his lip and then forces a smile across his mouth. If it's an attempt to settle his master, it fails. It is not genuine looking enough to fool anyone, let alone Hannibal.

"Have you been watching me for long?" asks Hannibal and he's surprised when Will actually answers.

"No, just awake and thinking."

Hannibal wants to ask *what* exactly Will has been thinking but how geniune an answer could he hope for? He rolls away from Will, sitting up and sliding swiftly out of the bed. He moves to the bathroom, ignoring Will, or at least holding onto the pretense of it.

He looks at himself in the mirror and wonders how exactly something he's wanted for so long could feel so odd, so *wrong*. He's startled by movement and he turns to see Will in the doorway, standing and watching. It's unsettling.

"Things have changed," says Will softly and Hannibal can't help but roll his eyes at the obviousness of the statement. "I thought you'd be happy."

"Did you enjoy it?" asks Hannibal, turning on the tap and splashing his face with cool water. He straightens and looks at himself in the mirror and in the reflection, he sees Will step closer to stand beside him. His gaze switches to Will's eyes in the mirror.

"You should never have told me what you really wanted." It sounds like a threat, coming from Will's mouth but it's not delivered as one. Will almost seems to be pitying him in how

he says it. “I’m just a slave, all I can do is what my master wants of me but…” Will sighs and rubs a hand over his eyes. He turns to look at the real Hannibal and Hannibal forces his own gaze away from the mirror to look into the real Will’s eyes also. “What you want...I don’t think it’s possible.”

”You don’t know what I want Will.” Hannibal straightens and he slaps Will’s face, not hard, but hard enough. Will’s hand goes to his jaw. “Don’t presume to think you know what your master wants.”

Hannibal stalks past him, out of the bedroom and to his wardrobe, pulling out clothing selections and choosing his outfit with more intensity than the task perhaps deserves.

”You want the impossible.” Will’s voice startles him and Hannibal feels anger, rage at the insolence of a *slave* of *Will* to speak to him this way.

Hannibal turns and steps close, crowding up against Will, pressing their naked flesh together, using his extra height to intimidate in the pettiest of ways. “And what is it that I want, that’s so impossible? What is it that *you* have seen that I have not?”

Will shakes his head, looking almost sad for a moment. “You’ve seen it, you know.” Will sighs and steps back, sitting on the edge of the bed and looking small, non threatening. “You want an equal and I can’t be that for you master, as much as I can try.”

Hannibal knows this but he doesn’t want to be confronted with it, doesn’t want to hear it from the mouth of a slave. He returns to choosing clothing and he dresses swiftly before heading downstairs and attempting to maintain the normalcy of a routine.

He doesn’t want to admit that Will is getting under his skin, has gotten so far inside him that he can’t escape it. He doesn’t want to admit that Will is *right* and that perhaps this means it’s over, that it’s time to end it and get rid of him, not when things feel so tantalisingly close.

He needs to think, needs to be away from Will and normally it would be as simple as retreating into his mind palace and finding the answers he seeks in his own mind. There are not answers within though, not ones he can see at a glance or by simply checking behind the correct door.

Hannibal picks up his car keys and retreats from the kitchen, from his sanctuary, from the places that should give him respite but don’t seem to be doing that today. He heads outside and ignores the chill in the air. He climbs into his car and starts the engine and drives.

He has no destination, no plan, and as someone who usually does have such things in mind, this is both exhilarating and discomfiting. He is the one who always knows such things and yet now he is not, a mere slave getting the best of him. But then Will is no mere slave, that much is clear. Will is more than a slave, is more than anyone else has gotten to be in a very, very long time. Hannibal clenches his jaw and he drives and he thinks and with each passing mile, his thoughts coalesce a little further, become a little clearer, even if the picture is not quite what he expected it to be.

He drives further as though hoping the physical distance may allow him to see things more clearly, to understand better, to see Will for what he really is. Yet he knows he never can, that was the joy of this experiment, in now knowing quite what the result would be. Perhaps Will is correct, that he can never be his equal, but is that because of Will's status as slave or something more. Can *any* person truly ever be Hannibal's equal?

Hannibal would be hard pressed to answer but he knows that Will has come startling close and perhaps that could be enough, could be enough reassurance to take the next experimental step. There is only one Will and he will only have one opportunity to make the next choice. He will have no chance to try again. Hannibal is sure enough of Will's unique nature, of how special he truly is.

He finds a turn and begins to make his way back, back to his home, his territory and everything in it, including his slave. Will is more than that though, and Hannibal already possesses him but now he knows, the level of possession could be so much deeper, so much more if only Will had a choice.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for your feedback and support of this fic <3

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Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

> My beta (the awesome endellionaeternus / Endellion) has finished! So the question is now, how quickly to post the rest? ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal pointedly ignores Will when he returns home, separating them from one another by space and with any physical item he can find. The kitchen works well for this, the central island the perfect feature for creating a barrier between them. Hannibal needs it, for now.

His own space doesn't quite feel like it belongs to him any more. He's brought others in but that wasn't *sharing* the way this feels like it is. Hannibal can't quite pinpoint the moment in which he started to think of *his* home belonging to Will just a little bit.

Will watches him with curious eyes and Hannibal prepares the next meal from Will's kill. The cooking brings no joy though, just the repeated actions of what should be something wonderful. Hannibal's thoughts are still elsewhere and each time he glances up at Will he's torn again.

He could continue to enjoy what they have, what this is becoming. He *knows* he could just as he *knows* he can't. It won't last, it can't, and much like everything else it is fleeting and it will pass. Hannibal knows that what is happening can not hold his attention indefinitely and if it can't then what is the point?

"I've upset you," says Will suddenly, the first words spoken in far too long, in all the time since Hannibal returned. Hannibal wants to laugh at the obviousness of the notion. He doesn't. He continues to cook and perhaps his silence is answer enough. It is Will's existence that upsets him, Will's ability to somehow throw everything out of alignment. It was supposed to be a game, an experiment. So why is he so upset by the first subject to get so far?

"What did you feel when you killed him?" Hannibal asks, looking down at the pieces of the slave broker that have found their way onto his chopping board. He pauses for just a moment before raising his eyes to meet Will's. Will seems to shudder slightly, closing his eyes and pursing his lips.

"I was glad," says Will softly and Hannibal tilts his head, waiting for more. "I was glad you told me to do it," continues Will, opening his eyes. "It was easy to do it, exhilarating and….perfect." Will sounds as though he's in awe, his eyes wide and Hannibal wants to reach across the counter between them and grab his neck and squeeze or perhaps he'd prefer to press his lips to Will's. He's not sure exactly with feelings of arousal and desire and hunger and anger and rage all swirling together.

”Would you have done it if things were different?” This time it’s Will who tilts his head, looking curiously up at Hannibal. Hannibal slips the meat into the pan.

”Things weren’t different,” Will states simply and he leans forward to watch the meat browning.

The remainder of Hannibal’s cooking is performed in silence and he plates up the dishes with less care than he normally would. He would normally loathe to send any dish to someone without it reaching perfection but for once he finds himself all too distracted, all too torn away and lost and mixed up.

They sit at the dining table and Hannibal opens and pours wine but doesn’t drink it. He watches as Will sips at his glass but the liquid doesn’t reduce, just the illusion of imbibing. Is it all for Hannibal’s benefit? Is anything real?

Hannibal takes risks all the time; he tries new things, foods and drinks and experiences. He kills people who would have consequence for him if he were ever caught. He takes risks with things he doesn’t care about all the time and yet this seems, this feels, different. He licks his lips and looks down at his barely touched plate and he knows that this is a time for experimentation, this is a time for not knowing what will happen next. This is all about what *might* happen next.

”Who should I bring you next?” Hannibal asks, looking down at his plate. He doesn’t look up right away, waiting for Will to break first and speak, to answer the question.

”Whoever you want, Master.”

Hannibal clenches his jaw, the tone is wrong in Will’s voice, the words themselves even more so. “I’m giving you a choice,” says Hannibal and he can almost guess what Will might answer to that.

”Are you ordering me to pick someone?” asks Will and it’s not quite what Hannibal expected him to say but not a million miles different. Will is attempting to distract and sidetrack, to point Hannibal’s attention inwards rather than focus on his slave. Hannibal looks up at him and he’s almost startled at how earnest Will seems to look.

”So I’ll buy another slave, I’ll pick someone out, or even a stranger from the street. Does it matter?” Hannibal smiles and watches the micro expressions fleeting as they cross Will’s face.

”I suppose it doesn’t, not to you,” says Will, sounding thoughtful suddenly as though he’s let his true internal monologue slip from his lips. He straightens in his seat, looking Hannibal in the eye for just a moment before looking demurely down at his plate.

”You’d prefer another who *deserves* it?” Hannibal asks and the thought is so wonderfully ludicrous. Who is Will to make such a call? But then, isn’t that what Hannibal wants? Has Will been elevated to a level where he can make such a verdict? If so, whose doing was it really?

Hannibal stands and walks away from the table, knowing that he needs to be away from here, out and apart and *elsewhere*. He leaves the house only because it's started to feel all too much like Will lives there, not simply a guest of Hannibal's, but then that's Hannibal's own doing, of that he's sure.

Hannibal isn't really thinking of his destination but he follows familiar enough roads to the types of places he's picked up slaves before.

They're closed at this time, at least the reputable ones. Even so, what is he even searching for? A replacement? Another specimen? Or perhaps this is just a test for Will? Yet another that Will is going to pass, and that should delight and yet all it does is frustrate and enrage.

As he drives through poorer streets and rougher parts of the city, the life seems to come back to things. There are people out and about, forced into the night by circumstance. He sees lights and open doors and buildings with signs outside advertising their wares and part of him imagines going on the type of rampage that someone like him is not foolish and animalistic enough to commit. Hannibal knows he has more control than that.

He drives on and looks at the world around him before making a decision that he hopes he won't regret.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for your feedback and support of this fic <3

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Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

Beta by endellionaeternus / Endellion!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Will is sleeping, or at least pretending to. The house is so quiet and dark when Hannibal returns. He doesn't get to be stealthy, not struggling with the unexpected extra weight. He didn't have everything with him, the supplies and planning that he normally brings to these things. This was impulsive, foolish even.

The room in the basement is cool, sterile and scrubbed clean from the last time. The body is still slack and Hannibal is glad that he had kept the drugs in the trunk of his car, even though he probably shouldn't.

He stands and watches the unconscious face and it feels as though the grabbing and bringing home of this man has all been a strange dream. He's noone of consequence, or at least he wasn't before tonight.

Hannibal leaves him, walking up and through the kitchen, stalking through the quiet house. He pulls his tie free from his collar as he ascends the stairs to the row of bedrooms, bringing him close to Will's door.

It's closed and Hannibal hesitates before opening it, as though he worries for Will's privacy but that thought is foolish and Hannibal can't even think where it might have come from. Will is a slave; slaves don't have any privacy.

Will is lying in the bed but he's not asleep, he can't be. His body is too tense under the sheets, stiff and taut and waiting. Has he been waiting for Hannibal to come?

Hannibal moves and sits on the bed, his weight dipping the mattress and Will rolls onto his back, not even attempting to feign sleep as he might have done once. They look at one another in the dark and both wait for the other to speak.

They wait for a long time and finally Hannibal licks his lips and breaks the silence not in surrender but impatience, or at least that's what he tells himself. "I brought you someone."

"A slave." Will's words are a statement, not a question. He's putting it to Hannibal and it somehow sounds like a challenge.

"I was going to bring you a slave, but what would that prove?" Will doesn't say anything but he does sit up, moving a little closer to Hannibal. Hannibal can see the edges of Will's eyes

where the small bit of light from the hallway shines against the whites. “If I brought a slave, would you do it? Would you take its life?”

”It? You see all slaves as nothing more than objects here for your amusement.” The statement is so up front, nothing like what Will has spoken thus far. Hannibal leans and turns on the lamp and Will recoils slightly from the sudden flood of light. He looks tired, worn out perhaps. Hannibal is the one to tilt his head, in a manner that makes him think of Will even as he does it. As though he can understand this creature by changing the viewing angle just a bit. It doesn’t work.

”If I brought a slave, if I said I had new prey for you downstairs, how would you feel?”

Will sighs and opens his eyes and looks into Hannibal’s. He shifts and moves, the sheets sliding down around him, revealing his bare chest and he moves across the mattress more, swinging legs underneath him to kneel, folding himself so they sit with their eyes level. Hannibal turns to properly look at Will’s face and he’s almost startled when Will lifts his hand and cups his cheek.

”I almost feel sorry for you,” mutters Will, so softly that Hannibal almost misses the words. It should enrage him, that a *slave* should feel pity for *him*. He can’t help but feel intrigued all over again but as soon as he regains the power of speech, the fleeting moment is gone and Will has looked away, breaking their eye contact and dropping his hand onto the bed between them.

”If we go down there, and I put a knife in your hand, what would you do?” He’s pushing, he knows he’s pushing too hard, that he’s going to break through and ruin everything but he can’t seem to stop himself. He watches as Will bites his lip and looks back up at him. “How would you do it? Would you slit his throat like the pigs? Like the last one?”

Will moves, walking across the tiny piece of space between them on his knees, pressing against Hannibal’s back and side, leaning his chin on Hannibal’s shoulder. He curls his arms around Hannibal’s chest and Hannibal sits still, allowing this and waiting, wondering. Will speaks softly, no need to be loud in the quiet room with his lips so close to Hannibal’s ear.

”The knife, against the jugular. Slow, at first. Not a deep enough cut to pierce it, not enough to kill. Just a press of metal against skin.” Hannibal feels Will’s arms tighten slightly, feels Will’s fingertip trace under his jaw and along his neck. Hannibal closes his eyes and for a brief moment he can imagine that Will’s warm fingertip feels as sharp steel would.

”Would you beg?” Whispers Will, pressing his finger against Hannibal’s throat in a mockery of how he might press with a knife.

”For my life or for you to kill him? Which prey are we talking about?” Hannibal becomes acutely aware of his own arousal, of how Will smells and the warmth radiating from his body. He thinks that if Will were to be holding a knife right now, perhaps it would be fitting for this to be how he dies, the result of some miscalculation. Should he be angry at his own failure or perhaps joyous at just how successful this little experiment has gone. Then again, is this success? It can’t be, not yet.

Hannibal feels Will's finger slip from his throat and for a moment he hopes Will might produce a real knife. Instead Will moves to Hannibal's side, turning his face and kissing him. Will's lips are warm and Hannibal can feel his heartbeat in his ears. This is not the kiss of master and slave, this is not just sex. It feels so much more intimate, as lovers might kiss, as someone who was his equal might kiss him but Hannibal thought he *knew* such a person did not exist.

He presses and turns and they're grappling at each other and moving and rolling and Hannibal isn't sure if he wants to press on with this or grab Will by the hand and drag him down to the basement to put a knife in his hand instead and tell him to do it.

He doesn't want that, but then he does, can't quite line up true desire in his heart and his head so he tries not to think, tries to focus on how aggressive Will's kisses seem, how wild and alive he feels. Will bucking against him and scratching at him and then Will is on top and pressing down on Hannibal's arms and Hannibal for a moment isn't quite so sure that overpowering Will would be as easy as he's been taking for granted up until now.

Perhaps part of him wants Will to shift this dynamic, to take charge, to *own* Hannibal and much more than a simple sexual act, but on some deeper uncomfortable level. They're moving against each other and Hannibal can feel Will's fingers loosen his tie and pull at his shirt buttons and he lets him, or takes it, something that might signify some shift in power if either of them were to read into what they let themselves do so naturally.

Hannibal lies and allows Will to break their kiss, he allows Will to move down his body and unfasten his belt, he allows Will to shift and pull at his clothes and pull his hard dick from his pants. He allows Will to spit and lick at him to provide the minimal and hurried lubrication. Hannibal doesn't speak, doesn't order Will to get the real lubrication from beside the bed. Part of him imagines that if Will wants it, Will can get it himself, no orders needed.

Will is tight, too tight, and Will lets out a sound from his throat as he forces their bodies together. It feels good and not all at once, too much stimulation and pressure and the weight of Will on top and the movement and shift of his hips, the way the fabric of his bunched up clothes press and scratch, the press of Will's weight when he leans his arms forward and brings their chests together.

Hannibal lies still and closes his eyes and when Will kisses his neck, he almost starts for the split second Will's lips felt as though they might be steel against his throat instead. His breath catches and he's releasing and coming and falling over an edge he can't define and this isn't just sex, it's more than that and then Will is moving and his hand is squirming between their bodies and it's not taking much until Will comes too.

They lie, awkward and heavy and breathing and trying to find their wits and Hannibal is so very aware of the heat of Will's body and the stickiness of his skin and the tickle of his hair and every little piece of Will that touches against him and his scent in their air of the room.

"Get up, we need to go downstairs," says Hannibal and Will makes a low annoyed sound before sitting up and sliding free. It's a sound that should get him punished but Hannibal isn't in the mood for that right now. He stands and doesn't bother to straighten his clothes, it's too

far gone for that. He closes his flies and fastens his belt and casts the tie to the rumpled bed along with his jacket.

Will slides on a pair of boxer briefs and pads down the hallway after him. Hannibal knows he's just there, just behind as he strides down the hall and down the stairs, to the basement, to this final test.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for your feedback and support of this fic <3

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Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

Beta by endellionaeternus / Endellion!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He's not sure how long they've been standing there, looking, *watching*. They're both guilty of it, of this inaction, of standing and waiting for the other to move. Hannibal knows it should be him, he should be telling Will what to do, but he doesn't want to. He wants Will to go forward and make this choice, to be what Hannibal knows he is capable of being. He turns his head and looks at Will, who stares ahead at the man in the basement, tied down to the table in a scene that is so like one that came not so long before.

Hannibal doesn't want a repeat, but then he's not exactly sure what he wants this to look like either. What does Will's decision truly look like? How can he know that this is what Will truly wants?

It takes too long for one of them to run out of patience, it's about when their victim wakes and starts to scream out behind the gag. Will seems startled, a little bit, at the behaviour. He frowns and Hannibal watches the different unreadable thoughts flickering across Will's face.

"What is it?" Hannibal asks and Will frowns at the man on the table before turning to Hannibal.

"Nothing," he says softly, casting his eyes down and looking and sounding submissive, nothing like who he was earlier. Now it's Hannibal who frowns, annoyance and confusion and he clenches his jaw and steps in tight, using a fingertip to raise Will's chin, *forcing* him to look Hannibal in the eye, to look his *master* in the eye.

"I want honesty," Hannibal says and he's being so honest himself that how could Will respond with anything but the truth? He tries to look less intimidating, to not make this into one of their other interactions, to not make this another charade between them, all an act and hearing what the other wants to hear.

"I thought you'd bring a slave," says Will softly. "A slave who was just going to lie there and take it and...I didn't think I'd be able to do it. But then you'd order me to." Will is looking him right in the eye as he speaks and Hannibal believes the words, needs to believe them.

"So you wouldn't have done it? If I had brought you someone that you didn't believe deserved it?"

"Does he?" Will's gaze shifts to the side, to the man on the table and Hannibal lets his hand drop, lets Will look and all at once he sees it, sees how this is never going to live up to the

fantasy that he's built.

He looks at Will watching the intended victim and he knows that it won't mean anything. He can tell Will that the man was selling underage slaves to the highest bidder, that he wasn't being scrupulous in checking papers, that Hannibal is pretty sure that many were illegally acquired. Hannibal could point out that the man was so very rude and crass and when Hannibal was going to buy a victim, a slave, that he instinctively knew that Will wouldn't go for that, that Will has his own needs, that he doesn't just seek justice against those rude and disgusting sorts but against some vision of right and wrong, some balance to be restored. Hannibal closes his eyes against the image of Will and he feels regret over the thought that perhaps this is where he ends things, that even if Will kills this man, even as beautiful as that image might be, it's not a true choice, it's not what Hannibal has wanted to see all this time.

There is a glaring problem with Hannibal's experiment, one that he should have spotted sooner, one that he should have accounted for. Hannibal knows that he is smarter than this, that he holds himself to a higher standard than this and yet he allowed this to slip past him.

"Tell me Will, if I gave you a knife now, what would you do?" It's a stupid question and the answer will mean nothing and yet Hannibal must ask it.

"What would you want me to do? To kill him?" Will gestures with a nod of his head to the man on the table. "I'm sure he deserves it, you know my type now, don't you?" He bites his lip and then turns to look at Hannibal and smiles then, sudden and there's a flash of that intriguing danger, just below the surface. "Perhaps you'd prefer I take that knife and turn on *you*." Will sighs then, his expression shifting entirely, closing off, becoming small and weak once more. "Perhaps I'd turn the blade on myself, maybe I'd end this before you got to."

"Why would you do that?"

Will shakes his head. "You wouldn't understand what it's like to have all control taken from you, to know that you have nothing, no aim of your own destiny, just the hope that what happens to you is less terrible than what has come before."

If Hannibal felt the way others do, perhaps he'd feel sorry for Will in a way that he's never felt for any of the others. It's never mattered before what a slave wanted, what they felt. It's never mattered what their desires were for their life and yet now he finds that he wants Will to be *happy* and yet he's so certain that that's impossible now.

"If I ordered you to kill him, would you do it?"

"Yes."

"What about if I ordered you to attack me?"

Will's head snaps up, eyes narrowing. "A ploy? So you can kill me with less remorse? I didn't think you felt remorse." Hannibal gives a half hearted smile at that. "It's a trick though, it results in doom in either case. A slave who kills their master would be tortured to death." Will looks intently at Hannibal and he smiles but it doesn't reach his eyes. "I don't believe for a second that I could take you, I can fathom what you're capable of, *Hannibal*."

Hannibal doesn't react to Will's usage of his name. He should be punished but Hannibal hasn't felt as though Will is his slave for a while now. He is, he knows that much on an academic level and yet part of it doesn't feel right. One cannot own one's equal, one cannot control an equal. It wouldn't work within the confines of this rigid dynamic between them.

Hannibal turns abruptly, needing to be away and apart from temptation, away from the knives and tools that are so close to hand and facilitating the path to some rash decisions. He walks upstairs and breathes and *knows* he should think on things. Some decisions should be slept on and yet Hannibal doesn't want to wait, as though afraid that if he does he'll change his mind.

He goes to somewhere that should be a sanctuary but just like the rest of the house this kitchen feels like part of it is Will's now. He stands at the counter and his eyes are drawn to the knife block and he ponders picking one up just to feel the weight in his hand. He licks his lips and he wonders what Will is doing. Is he missing something downstairs or is he moments from appearing at the door, following Hannibal like a pathetic puppy, like a pathetic slave that can do no more than follow master's orders.

Will appears at the door then, no blood, no knife in hand and Hannibal knows that he didn't do it, that he won't do it, not without an order. Hannibal is moving and reaching and it's not the knife his fingers close on first but it is the phone and he pages through the memory to find the number and it's not the office he rings but a home number.

He wakes them and they're not happy but when someone has the money that Hannibal has, most things can be achieved regardless of the time of night. It doesn't take that much. More than Will is worth, on paper at least. A stupid amount of money promised to get someone to come over at this time of night, to fill out some stupid paperwork, to make something legal even though it shouldn't matter and yet it does.

Freeing a slave doesn't take that much. A notary and some paperwork, an upload there and then to the online database, the submission to be cleared within 24 hours. It's all so dry and simple, too simple for what in one life could be such a great moment.

Will doesn't speak, doesn't react to the curious looks that Hannibal's lawyer casts between them. Hannibal doesn't care, even if he looks so odd to a man that has never seen this side of him, *ever*. It's a stupid decision, he shouldn't be doing this, should instead just kill Will and cut his losses and yet he *hopes* that this is right, that this is what the next step needs to be.

They both sign and as the paperwork legally severs their relationship as master and slave, Hannibal hopes this might be something that can bring them together instead.

The lawyer is suddenly gone, heading home to his own bed and his own family and Hannibal is looking at Will and Will is looking at Hannibal and neither can seem to understand what Hannibal has just done.

”Why?” asks Will and Hannibal can't do much more than shrug.

”So Will, what do *you* want to do now?”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for your feedback and support of this fic <3

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Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

It's hard to believe the penultimate chapter is upon us.

Beta by endellionaeternus / Endellion!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It’s Hannibal who follows Will. He lets him lead the way and Will takes to this all too easily. Perhaps Hannibal takes to it far too easily too. Part of him thinks it nice to have another take the reins.

They move down the stairs and the man is still there, still tied down and his thrashing and muffled screaming starts up anew when they enter his line of sight.

Will turns to look at him and even though he’s still shorter and smaller and even though he’s shirtless and bare, he doesn’t look vulnerable in the way he did before. “Tell me, what did this one do?” Hannibal smiles at Will’s words, phrased as an order and yet that doesn’t irritate him any more.

”I was going to buy from him, but then I saw the conditions of this slaves, the way he made them live and I don’t doubt that not all of them were of age.” It’s not a whole truth. The true deciding factor had been the man’s crass and lewd comments, the way he spat as he spoke, the griminess of his premises. “He is the worst type of slave trader.” Will nods.

Hannibal feels as though he’s watching something truly beautiful, the creation of great art, a masterpiece, *his,* masterpiece, his Will, finally coming into his own. Will picks up the knife, the same one as before and he hefts it in his hand and he turns and looks at Hannibal and smiles, some kind of delight in him that Hannibal hasn’t seen before. Will stands at the head of the table and he looks down at the squirming body, watches how the man tries to wiggle free of his bonds. Will brings the knife up to his own throat though and Hannibal instinctively takes a step forward, wanting to scream out no.

But Will is not so self destructive, his knife slipping not against flesh but against leather as he brings the tip of the blade between his collar and his neck. He slices and saws, the sharp knife still taking time to cut through the high quality leather. It’s a symbol, one that Will could have removed at any time and yet seeing him do it with such finality feels so much more important. Will lets the ruined collar drop and the metal buckle, no doubt warm from Will’s body thumps against the concrete floor.

The knife is still in Will’s hand and it glints in the light, harsh and artificial and Hannibal muses that such a beautiful display deserves better lighting. Perhaps he’ll have some installed for the next time.

Will moves slowly, deliberately and Hannibal barely notices the struggling and screams of the man on the table. This is beautiful, it's Will doing this, choosing to do this and there was no order this time, no demand. Will *wants* this and Hannibal can barely breathe as he watches the way the blade cuts into skin, blood spurting and flowing, so bright and fast. Hannibal thinks that surely there is no more beautiful colour in the world than that of the freshest spilled arterial blood, red and vibrant so much brighter with its content of oxygen, carrying to somewhere it can never go.

Will makes another cut, slaughtering this pig with practiced hands and yet this feels like the first time and Will looks up at him and smiles and Hannibal can feel it pass between them, this understanding and trust the like of which he hasn't felt before. It feels so oddly safe and nice. He smiles back.

They both watch the life flowing out of the pig, watch the light die in him and the red spilling into an ever growing puddle on the floor. It looks like more blood than it really is; Hannibal knows exactly how much a human body holds.

They move together, falling into a pattern that feels practiced despite its newness. Hannibal leads in places and Will in others, giving and taking as they butcher the body and bring the meat to hang.

They work methodically and it's different with someone else here. Hannibal hasn't shared this step with anyone before and it should feel wrong, strange somehow and yet it feels right that it should happen like this.

They take the fresh liver, so dark and wet and Hannibal slides it into a metal pan and carries it upstairs. He sits it on the counter and they move together through the house and upstairs. There's no discussion, no question or conversation. They both just know that this is how it is and Hannibal smiles as he undresses and watches Will strip his small bit of clothing from his body.

They shower together, washing grime and spilled blood and sweat and Hannibal thinks that Will must have done this before, cleaned his body off after the slaughter of a pig, but this is different meat. They wash each other and Hannibal finds his thoughts turning tender as he washes Will's hair, as though he's a lover.

Will is not his slave, not any more, and perhaps that means that Hannibal can change things, that things don't have to stay the way they have been. He watches Will step out of the shower and take towel and he watches him rub the water from his skin and in the dim glow of the wall light above the mirror, Will looks perfect.

They dress in companionable silence. They both choose comfortable wear and Hannibal smiles again at the thought that Will's clothes don't need to sit unused or passed down to another, not this time.

They move to the kitchen and together they cook. It's not a performance for an audience this time. Will watches and Hannibal teaches and Hannibal feels a swell of something in his chest when Will smiles at the way Hannibal throws an onion behind his back to catch it in his other hand and he knows he's showing off in a foolish way and yet he can't seem to help himself.

”I haven’t shared this with an equal, not...not for a very long time,” says Hannibal and he avoids saying *ever* which perhaps was the truth of it. Will nods and looks a little solemn for a moment before shrugging his shoulders.

”I like watching you cook,” he says softly and he takes a sip of his drink and Hannibal continues with his performance.

The meal comes together so beautifully and while eating it together, Hannibal thinks he’d like to bring Will to one of his dinner parties, but then he doesn’t like to think how his guests who knew Will as his slave would react. Hannibal is not fond of people who think less of him, who think they know who he is and what he wants. No one has him figured out though, he thinks, looking at Will, one might have come close.

They eat in mostly companionable silence, commenting on the food but avoiding speaking about such big topics that float on the periphery of things. How will things be now? How will this work? How are things going to change between them? The unknown of it is both so thrilling and terrifying. Hannibal finds it exhilarating in a way he hasn’t felt in far too long.

They finish their meal and sip wine and finally Will lowers his glass and presses his hands to the table and tilts his head just so. “Shall we go upstairs?” he asks and Hannibal leans back in his chair and raises his eyebrows.

”You wish to? After everything that’s happened before? It’s your choice now Will.”

”I know that.” Will frowns a little, turning away. “I just...come upstairs with me….come to *bed* with me.”

There’s something about how Will says it, no artificial and exaggerated seduction, no false allure. He stands and he looks over his shoulder at Hannibal and Hannibal *knows* that either way, Will is going to walk up the stairs, and now it’s his choice on whether to join him or not.

He follows, letting Will lead and they make their way to Hannibal’s bedroom. Will takes Hannibal’s arm, holding it by the wrist and he places his hand at the base of his own spine, pressing close and encouraging Hannibal to hold him. It’s intimate, comforting and when Will wraps his own arms around Hannibal and they kiss, softly and sweetly, Hannibal feels like he’s found something he’s been missing all this time.

When they undress each other, when they kiss and lick and run fingers across skin, it’s not just sex, it’s not *fucking*. They slide against one another and Hannibal rolls Will over but it’s not to press him down but to lick down his spine and open Will up in the most intimate of ways. Will quivers and he audibly sighs as Hannibal licks at him, wetting and loosening with his tongue.

He’s smelled and tasted Will so many places but this place is different, more intimate. He wants to enter Will but he wonders how it will feel to take Will into his own body, to lie underneath this man. He can do that now that there’s no concern about their different standing. He can lie back and take what is given to him. It’s not how it seems to be happening this time but Hannibal knows that there will be more opportunities, countless opportunities to

experiment, to find the best way for their bodies and minds to slot together with each of their imperfections lining up to a perfect whole.

What they do now is not about release, though the thoughts in his head steer him that way. Hannibal looks at Will's body before him and he wants to see his face and he rolls Will over and it's a testament to Will's flexibility that they can arrange their limbs and slide together and Hannibal's inside him and Will is kissing him and he knows that Will is inside him too, deeper and more intimate. This isn't fucking, this is making love and it's been far too long.

Their rhythm is slow, deliberate, and neither of them are in a rush. This is connection, something Hannibal had thought lost forever and they've done something akin to this act before but this time it's different, this time Will chose to be there and when they build together and reach their peak together, it's joining them anew. Hannibal is almost loath to catagorise the feeling inside as happiness and yet, what else to call it, if not that?

Hannibal cleans up, allowing Will to lay lax and loose on the bed afterwards. He wipes the result of Will's orgasm from his own stomach and from Will's and he smiles at him fondly and Will smiles back. Perhaps this is what love might feel like.

Hannibal scoops Will up and arranges them both in the bed and he curls around Will tightly but Will wriggles free to turn and look at him, a small space between them. "I want to look at you," whispers Will and Hannibal smiles at the thought of having Will's attention, even as they're both so bone deep exhausted. It's starting to grow light outside, sun peeping in between the curtains and they both close their eyes and fall asleep and Hannibal can't keep the smile from his lips.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for your feedback and support of this fic, it's been a wild ride.

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Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

> We made it, the final chapter. Just a brief epilogue left after this one. Thanks for sticking with me to here <3
>
> Beta by endellionaeternus / Endellion!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It's late in the day, too late to be waking, and yet Hannibal doesn't mind. He stretches before opening his eyes which isn't his habit and yet he luxuriates in it all the same. He turns to look at the empty pillow next to him and he sits up quickly to find Will sitting in the chair by the window, watching him.

Hannibal suddenly feels very vulnerable in a way he hasn't felt before. He naked in bed and unaware and Will, fully dressed, upright and watching him sleep. "How long have you been awake?" Hannibal asks but Will just shakes his head and looks down at the floor, taking some deep breaths and Hannibal tries to ignore the knot in his stomach.

"I debated this so many times," says Will softly and when Hannibal opens his mouth to say something, Will looks sharply up at him. "Please, just let me speak." Hannibal is silent.

"You should never have shown me what you really wanted, shouldn't have let me see. Once I knew...once I figured you out…." Will sighs and Hannibal wants to stand and stride across the room and strike Will down. Will who he's let in and is now using that as some weapon against him?

"You were supposed to be easy, I should hate you, especially after how you…." Will goes quiet then and Hannibal swallows hard.

"You're running away?" asks Hannibal and he knows the answer already. It's not even *escape*, not any more, not now that Will is *free*. He knows Will wouldn't slink away and dress and put on shoes and...he closes his eyes, hard, as though when he opens them the picture will be different.

"I'm not a slave any more, remember?" Will smiles but it's barely enough to brighten the dread on his face. "I just wanted to twist things around to make it happen and you were finally the perfect opportunity. You...you didn't make it so easy though, did you." Will laughs, forced and fake and Hannibal wrinkles his nose at the false sound. "I was playing along, it was all for your benefit."

"No," says Hannibal, the word slipping from his mouth without his control. He doesn't believe it, can't believe it. He frowns and Will looks at him, shrugging his shoulders.

”Whatever you need to believe, it was just...I just needed you to sign the papers. You know I was going to stay the full 24 hours, make sure you didn’t back out.” Will shrugs again. “It’s a bit reckless at this stage isn’t it? I just...fuck.” Will closes his eyes then, rocking forward and catching his head in his hands.

”If it means nothing to you, why is this so difficult?” asks Hannibal and he sounds pathetic to his own ears. He should cut his losses, kill Will now and leave no witness to his own shortcomings, to his own loss of control. He finds his own gaze darting, looking for the weapon that Will might have taken, *must* have taken. He doesn’t see anything and he doesn’t do any of the things he should be doing now, just sits, still, listening. Perhaps his need to understand, his desire to see the real Will is too great. He sits and watches instead and Will looks up at him and they regard one another.

”I was going to tell you that this was all bullshit, that it was all fake and that you were the sucker.” Will raises his eyebrows. “Would you believe me? If I said all that? If wanted to hurt you really bad?”

”But that’s not what you’re saying now Will.” Hannibal pulls the covers up his chest further, covering himself against a sudden chill.

”That was the danger all along. It had to be you, you were going to be the end of my road, either way. If I escaped or not, I was going to die. I knew that immediately.” Will shrugs again and Hannibal has a desire to put his arms around Will but he’s not sure if it’s comfort or kill.

”You liked it?” asks Hannibal and he wanted it to be statement but it’s just a pathetic attempt to find some comfort, some reassurance.

”Whatever I say, you can’t really ever know if it’s the truth.” Will is right and the thought alone is enough for Hannibal to know that the only ending that this can ever have is with him killing Will.

”You should have slipped away while I was asleep, you shouldn’t be here,” says Hannibal and he’s not sure why he’s bothering to warn him. Perhaps Will should have simply slit his throat while he slumbered.

”I know you think you want to kill me, you’ve thought about it a lot.” Will smiles. “You’re not going to Hannibal, not if I promise to tell you the truth of things.”

Will stands then and walks closer and it’s dangerous, Will must surely know that at any moment Hannibal could lunge. Will walks to the bed and sits next to him and he takes Hannibal’s hand in his own and Hannibal lets him. Will smiles and leans closer and keeps his voice low.

”The slave I killed, self defence, sure, maybe.” Will half smiles. “I led him on, knew he liked me, so I got him to follow me outside, wasn’t hard. Pig flesh has the exact same consistency so I knew how hard I’d have to drive the blade. It was just supposed to get me out of there, just supposed to get me back in the right kind of situation, the kind I could try to control.” Will starts to pull away but Hannibal squeezes his hand, firm, holding him there.

”But did you like it?” asks Hannibal, barely breathing as he forces the words out.

Will smiles and looks him in the eye and nods. “Yes, I did, and I enjoyed killing with you Hannibal, I...I *liked* it and I wish I could stay but....this was always the plan. Some of it was real, you can have that much at least. The important bits, it wasn’t all for show.” Will smiles at him, looking almost fondly at Hannibal and Hannibal knows they’re just words, consolation for his own patheticness. “I’m sorry, and goodbye Hannibal, until we meet again.”

Hannibal isn’t aware of allowing Will’s hand to slip from his grasp but he does and Will is walking away and he’s not following. “I’ll see you again then?” asks Hannibal and Will doesn’t look back, just closes the bedroom door behind him.

Perhaps it’s weak for Hannibal not to give chase, perhaps he should feel angry or worried, *something*. He doesn’t. He should feel something, rage and anger, annoyance at the thought that someone should believe they could get the better of him. He should get up and follow, should punish and destroy. He should do many things and yet he does not. He sits alone and thinks about Will and knows that he can’t do it, can’t live in a world in which Will does not *exist*. There are so few uncertainties in Hannibal’s life. It’s how he likes to live and, while parts of Will are mysterious still and while the thought might be some kind of deep denial, Hannibal knows they’ll be together again, under different circumstances. It’s the only way he can live, to know that Will lives too.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all so much for your feedback and support of this fic. Posting this last chapter has been like saying farewell to an old friend. An epilogue to wrap up tomorrow....

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Epilogue

Chapter Notes

Beta by endellionaeternus / Endellion.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal makes his breakfast and sighs at how quiet the house seems. It's not the same, cooking for one and his eyes go to his business cards and he thinks about setting up a viewing appointment. It's been long enough, plenty of time for things to settle. His acquaintances have stopped asking about his latest slave. They haven't commented yet on why he hasn't bought another. Perhaps it's time he did.

He doesn't need to *buy*, just browse. He bites his lip as he flips to the card for the slave house, one of the finer ones. He likes to use different ones each time, hide his pattern.

They're too eager to fit him in and he files the time away in the back of his mind as he hangs up the phone and continues making his omelette. He slides it onto the plate and garnishes and he thinks that this is the kind of meal he'd like to duplicate and share. He sighs at the thought before carrying his plate to the dining room to sit in silence and eat.

He doesn't feel particular joy at the thought of the session later but then he hadn't felt particularly thrilled before he'd found Will. Who knows what the next one brings. He tries not to think too much as he tidies and prepares to go about his day.

He opens the door and the day is bright and beautiful and he avoids stepping on the box left on his doorstep. He pauses in confusion before bending and picking it up. It's light, a shoebox perhaps, but wrapped in brown paper. The wrapping is somewhat inelegant and there's no address written on it and Hannibal frowns at it. He closes the door with his hip, slipping back inside with the box in his hands.

He carefully slides the tip of one of his kitchen knives along the tape, slicing through the plain wrapping and unveiling and plainer still box. He opens it carefully and sees it, nestled inside.

To the untrained eye, someone might assume it a sick joke, that someone had left what must surely be a pig's heart on his doorstep, a taunt or threat. Hannibal smiles. He knows a human heart when he sees one and he knows, *hopes* that the person who left it for him meant it as a gift, a sign, an invitation.

The slices are not so clean and perfect as Hannibal might have made himself, cutting the aorta cleanly, freeing this organ from it's original home. Hannibal smiles just the same, thinking that perhaps this is something that can be improved with time and practice. "You

have nothing to apologise for," whispers Hannibal. He reaches for the phone to cancel his appointment at the slave house. Very shortly, he won't need another.

Chapter End Notes

As bittersweet as it is for this to come to a final end. Thank you for reading and joining me on this journey. Thank you for all of your ongoing support, comments, kudos, conversations and embracing of this odd, dark little thing that came out of my brain.

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